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THE NEW RECTOR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE HOUSE OF THE WOLF.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

I HAVE heard that the bitterest pang a boy feels on returning to school after his first holidays is reserved for the moment when he opens his desk and recalls the happy hour, full of joyous anticipation, when he closed that desk with a bang. Oh, the pity of it! The change from that boy to this, from that morning to this evening! How meanly, how inadequately—so it seems to the urchin standing with swelling breast before the well-remembered grammar—did the lad who turned the key estimate his real happiness! How little did he enter into it or deserve it!

Just such a pang shot through the young rector's heart as he passed into the rectory porch after that scene at Mrs. Hammond's. His rage had had time to die down. With reflection had come a full sense of his position. As he entered the house he remembered—remembered only too well, grinding his teeth over the recollection—how secure, how free from embarrassments, how happy had been his situation when he last issued from that door a few, a very few, hours before. Such troubles as had then annoyed him seemed trifles light as air now. Mr. Bonamy's writ, the dislike of one section in the parish—how could he have let such things as these make him miserable for a moment?

How, indeed? Or, if there were anything grave in his situation.

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tion then, what was it now? He had held his head high; henceforward he would be a byword in the parish, a man under a cloud. The position in which he had placed himself would still be his, but only because he would cling to it to the last. Under no circumstances could it any longer be a source of pride to him. He had posed, involuntarily, as the earl's friend; he must submit in the future to be laughed at by the Greggs and avoided by the Homfrays. It seemed to him indeed that his future in Claversham could be only one long series of humiliations. He was a proud man, and as he thought of this he sprang from his chair and strode up and down the room, his cheeks flaming. Had there ever been such a fall before!

Mrs. Baxter, as yet ignorant of the news, though it was by this time spreading through the town, brought him his dinner, and he ate something in the dining-room. Then he went back to the study and sat idle and listless before his writing-table. There was a number of 'Punch' lying on it, and he took this up and read it through drearily, extracting a faint pleasure from its witticisms, but never for an instant forgetting the cloud of trouble brooding over him. Years afterwards he could recall some of the jokes in that 'Punch'—with a shudder. Presently he laid it down and began to think. And then, before his thoughts became quite unbearable, they were interrupted by the sound of a voice in the hall.

He rose and stood with his back to the fire, and as he waited, his eyes on the door, his face grew hot, his brow dark. He had little doubt that the visitor was Clode. He had looked to see him before, and even anticipated the relief of pouring his thoughts into a friendly ear. Nevertheless, now the thing had come, he dreaded the first moment of meeting, scarcely knowing how to bear himself in these changed circumstances.

But it was not Clode who entered. It was Jack Smith. The rector started, and, uncertain whether the barrister had heard of the blow which had fallen on him or no, stepped forward awkwardly, and held out his hand in a constrained fashion. Jack, on his side, had his own reasons for being ill at ease with his friend. The moment, however, the men's hands met they closed on one another in the old hearty fashion, and the grip told the rector that the other knew all. 'You have heard?' he muttered.

'Mr. Bonamy told me,' the barrister answered. 'I came across without delay.'

'You do not think I was aware of the earl's mistake, then?' Lindo said, with a faint smile.

'I should as soon believe that I knew of it myself!' Jack replied warmly. He was glad now that he had come. As he and Lindo stood half facing one another, each with an elbow on the mantelshelf, he felt that he could conquer the chill at his own heart—that, notwithstanding all, his old friend was still dear to him. Perhaps if the rector had been prospering as before, if no cloud had arisen in his sky, it might have been different. As it was, Jack's generous heart went out to him. 'Tell me what happened, old fellow,' he said cheerily—'that is, if you have no objection to taking me into your confidence.'

'I shall be only too glad of your help,' Lindo answered thankfully, feeling indeed—so potent is a single word of sympathy—happier already. 'I would ask you to sit down, Jack,' he continued, in a tone of rather sheepish raillery, 'and have a cup of coffee or some whisky, but I do not know whether I ought to do so, since Lord Dynmore says the things are not mine.'

'I will take the responsibility,' the lawyer answered, briskly ringing the bell. 'Was my lord very rude?'

'Confoundedly!' the rector answered. And then he told his story. Jack was surprised to find him more placable than he had expected; but presently he learned that this moderation was assumed. For the rector rose as he went on, and began to pace the room, and, the motion freeing his tongue, he betrayed little by little the indignation and resentment which he really felt. Jack happened to ask him, with a view to clearing the ground, whether he had quite made up his mind not to resign, and was astonished by the force and anger with which he repudiated the thought of doing so. 'Resign? No, never!' he cried, standing still, and almost glaring at his companion. 'Why should I? What have I done? Was it my mistake, that I am to suffer for it? Was it my fault, that for penalty I am to have the tenour of my life broken? Do you think I can go back to the Docks the same man I left them? I cannot. Nor is that all, or nearly all,' he added still more warmly—'I have been called a swindler and an impostor. Am I by resigning to plead guilty to the charge?'

'No!' Jack cried, catching fire himself, 'certainly not! I did not intend for a moment to advise that course, my dear fellow. I think you would be acting very foolishly if you resigned under these circumstances.'

'I am glad of that,' the rector said, sitting down with a sigh of relief. 'I feared you did not quite enter into my feelings.'

'I do thoroughly enter into them,' the barrister answered earnestly, 'but I want to do more—I want to help you. You must not go into this business blindly, old man. And, first, I think you ought to take the archdeacon or some other clergyman into your confidence. Show him the whole of your case, I mean, and——'

'And act upon his advice?' the young rector said, rebellion already flashing in his eye.

'No, not necessarily,' the barrister answered, skilfully adapting his tone to the irritability of his patient. 'Of course your *bona fides* at the time you accepted the living is the point of importance to you, Lindo. You did not see their solicitors—the earl's people, I mean—did you?'

'No,' the rector answered somewhat sullenly.

'Then their letters conveyed to you all you knew of the living and the offer?'

'Precisely.'

'Let us see them, then,' replied Jack, rising briskly from his chair. He had already determined to say nothing of the witness whom Mr. Bonamy had mentioned to him as asserting that the rector had bribed him. He knew enough of his friend to utterly disbelieve the story, and he considered it as told to him in confidence. 'There is no time like the present,' he continued. 'You have kept the letters, of course?'

'They are here,' Lindo answered, rising also, and unlocking as he spoke the little cupboard among the books; 'I made them into a packet and indorsed them soon after I came. They have been here ever since.'

He found them after a moment's search, and, without himself examining them, threw them to Jack, who had returned to his seat. The barrister untied the string and, glancing quickly at the dates of the letters, arranged them in order and flattened them out on his knee. 'Now,' he said, 'number one! That I think I have seen before.' He mumbled over the opening sentences, and turned the page. 'Hallo!' he exclaimed, holding the letter from him, and speaking in a tone of surprise—almost of consternation—'how is this?'

'What?' said the rector.

'You have torn off the latter part of this letter? Why on earth did you do that?'

'I never did,' Lindo answered incredulously. Obeying Jack's gesture he came, and, standing by his chair, looked over his shoulder. He saw then that part of the latter half of the sheet had been torn off. The signature and the last few words of the letter were gone. He looked and wondered. 'I never did it,' he said positively, 'whoever did. You may be sure of that.'

'You are certain?'

'Absolutely certain,' the rector answered with considerable warmth. 'I remember arranging and indorsing the packet. I am quite sure that this letter was intact then, for I read each one through. That was a few evenings after I came here.'

'Have you ever shown the letters to anyone?' Jack asked suspiciously.

'Never,' said the rector; 'they have not been removed from this cupboard, to my knowledge, since I put them there.'

'Think!' Jack rejoined, pressing his point steadily. 'I want you to be quite sure. You see this letter is rendered utterly worthless by the mutilation. Indeed, to produce it would be to raise a natural suspicion that the last sentence of the letter not being in our favour, we had got rid of it. Of course the chances are that the earl's solicitors have copies, but for the present that is not our business.'

'Well,' said the rector somewhat absently—he had been rather thinking than listening—'I do remember now a circumstance which may account for this. A short time after I came a man broke into the house and ransacked this cupboard. Possibly he did it.'

'A burglar, do you mean? Was he caught?' the barrister asked, figuratively pricking up his ears.

'No—or, rather, I should say yes,' Lindo answered. And then he explained how his curate, taking the man red-handed, had let him go, in the hope that, as it was his first offence, he would take warning and live honestly.

'But who was the burglar?' Jack inquired. 'You know, I suppose? Is he in the town now?'

'Clode never told me his name,' Lindo answered. 'The man made a point of that, and I did not press for it. I remember that Clode was somewhat ashamed of his clemency.'

'He had need to be,' Jack snorted. 'It sounds an extraordinary story. All the same, Lindo, I am not sure it has any connection with this.' He held the letter up before him as though

drawing inspiration from it. 'This letter, you see,' he went on presently, 'being the first in date would be inside the packet. Why should a man who wanted perhaps a bit of paper for a spill or a pipe-light unfasten this packet and take the innermost letter? I do not believe it.'

'But no one else save myself,' Lindo urged, 'has had access to the letter. And there it is torn.'

'Yes, here it is torn,' Jack admitted, gazing thoughtfully at it; 'that is true.'

For a few moments the two sat silent, Jack fingering the letter, Lindo with his eyes fixed gloomily on the fire. Suddenly the latter broke out without warning or preface: 'What a fool I have been!' he exclaimed, his tone one of abrupt overwhelming conviction. 'Good heavens, what a fool I have been!'

His friend looked at him in surprise, and saw that his face was crimson. 'Is it about the letter?' he asked, leaning forward, his tone sharp with professional impatience. 'You do not mean to say, Lindo, that you really——'

'No, no!' the young clergyman replied, ruthlessly interrupting him. 'It has nothing to do with the letter.'

He said no more, and Jack waited for further light; but none came, and the barrister reapplied his thoughts to the problem before him. He had only just hit upon a new idea, however, when he was again diverted by an interruption from Lindo. 'Jack,' said the latter impressively, 'I want you to give a message for me.'

'Not a cartel to Lord Dynmore, I hope?' the barrister muttered.

'No,' the rector answered, getting up and poking the fire unnecessarily—what a quantity of embarrassment has been liberated before now by means of pokers!—'no, I want you to give a message to your cousin—Miss Bonamy, I mean.' The rector paused, the poker still in his hand, and stole a sharp glance at his companion; but, reassured by the discovery that he was to all appearance buried in the letter, he continued: 'Would you mind telling her that I am sorry I misjudged her a short time back—she will understand—and behaved, I fear, very ungratefully to her? She warned me that there was a rumour afloat that something was amiss with my title, and I am afraid I was very rude to her. I should like you to tell her, if you will, that I—that I am particularly ashamed of myself,' he added, with a gulp.

He did not find the words easy of utterance—far from it; but

the effort they cost him was slight and trivial compared with that which poor Jack found himself called upon to make. For a moment, indeed, he was silent, his heart rebelling against the task assigned to him. To carry *his* message to *her*! Then his nobler self answered to the call, and he spoke. His words, 'Yes, I'll tell her,' came, it is true, a little late, in a voice a trifle thick, and were uttered with a coldness which Lindo would have remarked had he not been agitated himself. But they came—at a price. The Victoria Cross for moral courage can seldom be gained by a single act of valour. Many a one has failed to gain it who had strength enough for the first blow. 'Yes, I will tell her,' Jack repeated a few seconds later, folding up the letter and laying it on the table, but so contriving that his face was hidden from his friend. 'To-morrow will do, I suppose?' he added, the faintest tinge of irony in his tone. He may be pardoned if he thought the apology he was asked to carry came a little late.

'Oh, yes, to-morrow will do,' Lindo answered with a start; he had fallen into a reverie, but now roused himself. 'I am afraid you are very tired, old fellow,' he continued, looking gratefully at his friend. 'A friend in need is a friend indeed, you know. I cannot tell you'—with a sigh—'how very good I think it was of you to come to me.'

'Nonsense!' Jack said briskly. 'It was all in the day's work. As it is, I have done nothing. And that reminds me,' he continued, facing his companion with a smile—'what of the trouble between my uncle and you? About the sheep, I mean. You have put it in some lawyers' hands, have you not?'

'Yes,' Lindo answered reluctantly.

'Quite right, too,' said the barrister. 'Who are they?'

'Turner & Grey, of Birmingham.'

'Well, I will write,' Jack answered, 'if you will let me, and tell them to let the matter stand for the present. I think that will be the best course. Bonamy won't object.'

'But he has issued a writ,' the rector explained. A writ seemed to him a formidable engine. As well dally before the mouth of a cannon.

Jack, who knew better, smiled. The law's delays were familiar to him. He was aware of many a pleasant little halting-place between writ and judgment. 'Never mind about that,' he answered, with a confident laugh. 'Shall I settle it for you? I shall know better, perhaps, what to say to them.'

The rector assented gladly; adding, 'Here is their address.' It was stuck in the corner of a picture hanging over the fireplace. He took it down as he spoke and gave it to Jack, who put it carelessly into his pocket, and, seizing his hat, said he must go at once—that it was close on twelve. The rector would have repeated his thanks, but Jack would not stop to hear them, and in a moment was gone.

Reginald Lindo returned to the study after letting him out, and, dropping into the nearest chair, looked round with a sigh. Yet, the sigh notwithstanding, he was less unhappy now than he had been at dinner or while looking over that number of 'Punch.' His friend's visit had both cheered and softened him. His thoughts no longer dwelt on the earl's injustice, the desertion of his friends, or the humiliations in store for him; but went back to the warning Kate Bonamy had given him. Thence it was not unnatural that they should revert to the beginning of his acquaintance with her. He pictured her at Oxford, he saw her scolding Daintry in the stiff drawing-room, he saw her coming to meet him in the Red Lane; and, the veil of local prejudice being torn from his eyes by the events of the day, he began to discern that Kate, with all the drawbacks of her surroundings, was the fairest and noblest girl he had met at Claversham, or, for aught he could remember, elsewhere. His eyes glistened. He felt sure that for all the earls in England she would not have deserted him!

He had reached this point, and Jack had been gone five minutes or more, when he was startled by a loud rap at the house door. He stood up and, wondering who it could be at that hour, took a candle and went into the hall. Setting the candlestick on a table, he opened the door, and there, to his astonishment, was Jack come back again!

'Ah, good!' said the barrister, slipping in and shutting the door behind him, as though his return were not in the least degree extraordinary, 'I thought it was you. Look here; there is one thing I forgot to ask you, Lindo. Where did you get the address of those lawyers?'

He asked the question so earnestly, and his face, now that it could be seen by the strong light of the candle at his elbow, wore so curious an expression, that the rector was for a moment quite taken aback. 'They are good people, are they not?' he asked, wondering much,

'Oh, yes, the firm is good enough,' Jack answered impatiently. 'But who gave you their address?'

'Clode,' the rector answered. 'I went round to his lodgings and he wrote it down for me.'

'At his lodgings?' the barrister exclaimed.

'Certainly.'

'You are quite sure it was at his lodgings?'

'I am quite sure.'

'Ah! then look here,' Jack replied, laying his hand on Lindo's sleeve and looking up at him with an air of peculiar seriousness—'just tell me once more, so that I may have no doubt about it. Are you sure that from the time you docketed those letters until now you have never removed them—from this house, I mean?'

'Never!'

'Never let them go out of the house?'

'Never!' the rector answered firmly. 'I am as certain of it as a man can be certain of anything.'

'Thanks!' Jack cried. 'All right. Good night.'

And that was all. In a twinkling he had the door open and was gone, leaving the rector to go to bed in such a state of mystification as made him almost forget his fallen fortunes.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DAY AFTER.

THE rector did not expect to see Jack again for a time, and his first thought on rising next morning was of his curate. He had looked to see him, as we know, before bedtime. Disappointed in this, he still felt certain that the curate would hasten as soon as possible to offer his sympathy and assistance; and after breakfast he repaired to his study for the express purpose of receiving him. To find one friend in need is good, but to find two is better. The young clergyman felt, as people in trouble of a certain kind do feel, that though he had told Jack all about it, it would be a relief to tell Stephen all about it also; the more as Jack, whom he had told, was his personal friend, while Clode was identified with the place, and his unabated confidence and esteem—of retaining which the rector made no doubt—would go some way towards soothing the latter's wounded pride.

It was well, however, that Lindo, sitting down at his writing-table, found there some scattered notes upon which he could employ his thoughts, and which without any great concentration of mind he could form into a sermon. For otherwise his time would have been wasted. Ten o'clock came, and eleven, and half-past eleven; but no curate.

Mr. Clode, in fact, was engaged elsewhere. About half-past ten he turned briskly into the drive leading to Mrs. Hammond's house and walked up it at a good pace, with the step of a man who has news to tell, and is going to tell it. The morning was bright and sunny, the air crisp and fresh, yet not too cold. The gravel crunched pleasantly under his feet, while the hoar-frost melting on the dark-green leaves of the laurels bordered his path with a million gems as brilliant as evanescent. Possibly the pleasure he took in these things, possibly some thought of his own, lent animation to the curate's face and figure as he strode along. At any rate Miss Hammond, meeting him suddenly at a turn in the approach, saw a change in him, and, reading the signs aright, blushed.

'Well?' she said, smiling a question as she held out her hand. They had scarcely been alone together since the afternoon when the rector's inopportune call had brought about an understanding between them.

'Well?' he answered, retaining her hand. 'What is it, Laura?'

'I thought you were going to tell me,' she said, glancing up with shy assurance. The morning air was not fresher. She was so bright and piquant in her furs and with her dazzling complexion, that other eyes than her lover's might have been pardoned for likening her to the frost-drops on the laurels. At any rate, she sparkled as they did.

He looked down at her, fond admiration in his eyes. Had he not come up on purpose to see her? 'I think it is all right,' he said, in a slightly lower tone. 'I think I may answer for it, Laura, that we shall not have much longer to wait.'

She gazed at him, seeming for the moment startled and taken by surprise. 'Have you heard of a living, then?' she murmured, her eyes wide, her breath coming and going.

He nodded.

'Where?' she asked, in the same low tone. 'You do not mean—here?'

He nodded again.

'At Claversham!' she exclaimed. 'Then will Mr. Lindo have to go, do you think?'

'I think he will,' Clode answered, a glow of triumph warming his dark face and kindling his eyes. 'When Lord Dymore left here yesterday he drove straight to Mr. Bonamy's. You hardly believe it, do you? Well, it is true, for I had it from a sure source. And, that being so, I do not think Lindo will have much chance against such an alliance. It is not as if he had many friends here, or had got on well with the people.'

'The poor people like him,' she urged.

'Yes,' Clode answered sharply. 'He has spent money amongst them. It was not his own, you see.'

It was a brutal thing to say, and she cast a glance of gentle reproof at him. She did not remonstrate, however, but, slightly changing the subject, asked, 'Still, if Mr. Lindo goes, you are not sure of the living?'

'I think so,' he answered, smiling confidently down at her.

She looked puzzled. 'How do you know?' she asked. 'Did Lord Dymore promise it to you?'

'No; I wish he had,' he answered quickly. 'All the same, I think I am fairly sure of it without the promise.' And then he related to her what the archdeacon had told him as to Lord Dymore's intention of presenting the curates in future. 'Now do you see, Laura?' he said.

'Yes, I see,' she answered, looking down, and absently poking a hole in the gravel with the point of her umbrella.

'And you are content?'

'Yes,' she answered, looking up brightly from a little dream of the rectory as it should be, when feminine taste had transformed it with the aid of Persian rugs and old china and the hundred knick-knacks which are half a woman's life—'Yes, I am content, Mr. Clode.'

'Say "Stephen."'

'I am content, Stephen,' she answered obediently, a bright blush for a moment mingling with her smile.

He was about to make some warm rejoinder, when the sound of footsteps approaching from the house diverted his attention, and he looked up. The new-comer was Mrs. Hammond, on her way into the town. She waved her hand to him. 'Good morning,' she cried in her cheery voice—'you are just the person I wanted to see, Mr. Clode. This is good luck. Now, how is he?'

'Who? Mrs. Hammond,' said the curate, taken off his guard.

'Who?' she replied, reproach in her tone. She was a kind-hearted woman, and the scene in her drawing-room had really cost her a few minutes' sleep. 'Why, Mr. Lindo, to be sure. Whom else should I mean? I suppose you went in last night at once and told him how much we all sympathised with him? Indeed, I hope you did not leave him until you saw him well to bed, for I am sure he was hardly fit to be left alone, poor fellow!'

Mr. Clode stood silent, and looked troubled. Really, if it had occurred to him, he would have called to see Lindo. But it had not occurred to him, after what had happened—perhaps because he had been busied about things which 'seemed worth while.' He regretted now that he had not done so, since Mrs. Hammond seemed to think it so much a matter of course; the more as the omission compelled him to choose his side earlier than he need have done. However, it was too late now. So he shook his head. 'I have not seen him, Mrs. Hammond,' he said gravely. 'I have not been to the rectory.'

'What! you have not seen him?' she cried in amazement.

'No, Mrs. Hammond, I have not,' he answered, a slight tinge of hauteur in his manner. After all, he reflected, he would have found it painful to play another part before Laura after disclosing so much of his mind to her. 'What is more, Mrs. Hammond,' he continued, 'I am not anxious to see him; for, to tell you the truth, I fear that the meeting could only be a painful one.'

'Why, you do not mean to say,' the lady answered in a low, awe-stricken voice, 'that you think he knew anything about it, Mr. Clode?'

'At any rate,' the curate replied firmly, 'I cannot acquit him.'

'Not acquit him! Not acquit Mr. Lindo!' she stammered.

'No, I cannot,' Clode replied, striving to express in his voice and manner his extreme conscientiousness and the gloomy sense of responsibility under which he had arrived at his decision. 'I cannot get out of my head,' he continued gravely, 'Lord Dynmore's remark that, if the circumstances aroused suspicion in my mind, they could scarcely fail to apprise Mr. Lindo, who was more nearly concerned, of the truth, or something like the truth. Mind!' the curate added with a great show of candour, 'I do not say, Mrs. Hammond, that Mr. Lindo knew. I only say I think he suspected.'

'Well, *that* is very good of you!' Mrs. Hammond exclaimed, with a spirit and a power of sarcasm he had not expected. 'I daresay Mr. Lindo will be much obliged to you for *that*! But, for my part, I think it is a distinction without a difference!' And she nodded her head two or three times in great excitement.

'Oh, no!' the curate protested hastily.

'Well, I think it is, at any rate!' retorted the lady, very red in the face, and with all the bugles in her bonnet shaking. 'However, everyone to his opinion. But that is not mine, and I am sorry it is yours. Why, you are his curate!' she added in a tone of indignant wonder, which brought the blood to Clode's cheeks, and made him bite his lip in impotent anger. 'You ought to be the last person to doubt him!'

'Can I help it if I do?' he answered sullenly.

An angry reply was on Mrs. Hammond's lips, but her daughter intercepted it. 'Mother,' she said hurriedly, 'if Mr. Clode thinks in that way, can he be blamed for telling us? We are not the town. What he has told us he has told us in confidence.'

'A confidence Mrs. Hammond has made me bitterly regret,' he rejoined, taking skilful advantage of the intervention.

Mrs. Hammond grunted. She was still angry, but she felt herself baffled. 'Well, I do not understand these things, perhaps,' she said. 'But I do not agree with Mr. Clode, and I am not going to pretend to.'

'I am sure he does not wish you to,' said Laura sweetly. 'Only you did not quite understand, I think, that he was only giving us his private opinion. Of course he would not tell it to the town.'

'Well, that makes a difference, of course,' Mrs. Hammond allowed. 'But now I will say good-morning! For myself, I shall go straight to the rectory and inquire. Are you coming, Laura?'

Laura hesitated a moment, but she thought it prudent to go, and, with a bright little nod, she tripped after her mother. Mr. Clode, thus deserted, walked slowly down the drive, and wondered whether he had been premature in his revolt. He did not think so; and yet he wished he had not been so hasty—that he had not shown his hand quite so early. He had been a little carried away by the events of the previous afternoon. Even now, however, the more he thought of it, the more hopeless seemed the rector's position. Openly denounced by his patron as an impostor, at war with his churchwarden, disliked by a powerful section of the

parish, one action already commenced against him and another threatened—what else could he do but resign? ‘He may say he will not, to-day and to-morrow,’ the curate thought, smiling darkly to himself; ‘but they will be too much for him the day after.’

And whether Mr. Clode told this opinion of his in the town or not, it was certainly a very common one. Never had Claversham been treated to such a dish of gossip as this. On the evening of the bazaar, before the unsold goods had been cleared from the tables, the wildest rumours were already afloat in the town. The rector had been arrested; he had decamped; he was to be tried for fraud; he was not in holy orders at all; Mrs. Bedford would have to be married over again! With the morning these reports died away, and something like the truth came to be known—to the inexpressible satisfaction of Dr. Gregg and his like. The doctor was in and out of half the houses in the town that day. ‘Resign!’ he would say with a shriek—‘of course he will resign! And glad to escape so easily!’ Dr. Gregg, indeed, was in his glory now. The parts were reversed. It was for him now to meet the rector with a patronising nod; only, for some reason best known to himself, and perhaps arising from a subtle difference between the two men, he preferred to celebrate his triumph figuratively, and behind Lindo’s back.

What was said, and how it was said, can easily be imagined. When a man, who for some cause has held his head a little above his neighbours, stumbles and falls, we know what is likely to be said of him. And the young rector knew, and in his heart and in his study suffered horribly. All the afternoon of the day after the bazaar he walked the town with a smile on his face, ostensibly visiting in his district, really vindicating his pride and courage. He carried his head as high as ever, and the skirts of his long black coat fluttered as bravely as before. Dr. Gregg, who saw him from the Reading-room window, gave it as his opinion that he did not know what shame meant. But at heart the young man was very miserable. He knew that inquisitive eyes were upon his every gesture; that he was watched, jeered at, worst of all—pitied. He guessed, as the day wore on, drawing the inference from the curate’s avoidance of him, that even Clode had deserted him. And this, perhaps, almost as much as the resentment he harboured against Lord Dynmore, hardened him in his resolve not to resign or abate one tittle of his rights.

He fancied he stood alone. But, of course, there were some

who sympathised with him, and some who held their tongues and declined to commit themselves to any opinion. Among the latter Mr. Bonamy was conspicuous, much to the disgust of Dr. Gregg, whose first expression on hearing the news had been, 'What nuts for Bonamy!' As a fact, the snappish little doctor had never found his friend so morose and unpleasant as when he tried to sound him on this subject. He first espied him on the other side of the street, and rushed across, stuttering, almost before he reached him, 'Well? He will have to resign, won't he?'

'Who?' Mr. Bonamy said, standing still, and fixing his cold grey eyes on the excited little man. 'Who will have to resign?'

'Why, the rector, to be sure!' rejoined Gregg, feeling the check unpleasantly.

'Will he?'

'Well, I should say so,' urged the doctor, now quite taken aback, and gazing at the other with eyes of surprise. 'But I suppose you know best, Bonamy.'

'Then I am going to keep my knowledge to myself!' snarled the lawyer. And, rattling a handful of silver in his pocket, he stalked away, his hat on the back of his head, and his lank figure more ungainly than usual. In truth, he was in a very bad temper. He was angry with Lord Dynmore and dissatisfied with himself; given, indeed, to calling himself, 'half-a-dozen times in an hour, a quixotic fool for having thrown away the earl's business for the sake of a scruple which was little more than a whim. It is all very well to have a queer rugged code of honour of one's own, and to observe it. But when the observance sends away business—such business as brings with it the social consideration which men prize most highly when they most affect to despise it—why then a man is apt to take out his self-denial in ill-temper. Mr. Bonamy did so.

So Dr. Gregg went away calling the lawyer a bear, and an ill-bred fellow who did not know his own friends. Alas! the same thing might have been said, and with greater justice, of the rector. The archdeacon sat an hour in the rectory study, waiting patiently for him to return from his district, and after all got but a sorry reception. The elder man expressed, and expressed very warmly—he had come to do so—his full belief in Lindo's honesty and good faith, and was greatly touched by the effect his words produced upon the young fellow; who had come into the room, on learning his visitor's presence, with set lips and eyes of

challenge, but had by-and-by to turn his back and look out of the window, while in a very low tone he murmured his thanks. But, alas! the archdeacon went farther than sympathy. He let drop something about concession, and then the boat was over!

'Concession!' said the young man, turning as on a pivot, with every hair of his head bristling, and his voice clear enough now. 'What kind of concession do you mean?'

'Well,' said the archdeacon persuasively, 'the earl is a choleric man—a most passionate man, I know; and, when excited, utterly foolish and wrong-headed. But in his cooler moments I do not know anyone more just or, indeed, more generous. I feel sure that if you could prevail on yourself to meet him half-way——'

'To meet him half-way? By resigning, do you mean?' snapped the rector, interrupting him point-blank with the question.

'Oh, no, no,' said the archdeacon, 'I do not mean that.'

'Then in what way? How?'

But as the archdeacon really meant by resigning, he could not answer the question. And the interview ended in Lindo roundly stating his views, as he walked up and down the room, 'I will not resign!' he declared. 'Understand that, archdeacon! I will not resign! If Lord Dymore can put me out, well and good—let him. If not, I stay. He may be just or generous,' the young man continued scornfully—'all I know is that he insulted me grossly, and as no gentleman would have insulted another.'

'He is passionate, and was taken by surprise,' the archdeacon ventured to say. But the words were wasted, Lindo would not listen; and his visitor had presently to go, fearing that he had done more harm than good by his mediation. As for the rector, he was severely scolded later in the evening by Jack Smith for having omitted to lay the letters offering him the living before the archdeacon, or to explain to him the precise circumstances under which he had accepted it.

'But he said he did not doubt me,' the rector urged rather fractiously.

'Pooh! that is not the point,' the barrister retorted. 'Of course he does not. He knows you. But I want you to put him in possession of such a case as he may lay before others who do not know you. Look here, you are acquainted with a man called Felton, are you not?'

'Yes,' Lindo answered, with a slight start.

'Well, perhaps you are not aware that he has been to Lord Dynmore—so the tale runs in the town, and I know it is true—and stated that you have been for weeks bribing him to keep the secret.'

The rector sat motionless, staring at his friend. 'I did not know it,' he said at last, quite quietly. He was becoming accustomed to surprises of this kind. 'It is a wicked lie, of course.'

'Of course,' Jack assented, tossing one leg easily over the other, and thrusting his hands deep into his trousers pockets. 'But what do you say to it?'

'The man came to me,' Lindo explained, 'and told me that he was Lord Dynmore's servant, and that, crossing from America, he had foolishly lost his money at play. He begged me to assist him until Lord Dynmore's return, and I did so. Some ten days ago I discovered that he was leading a disreputable life, and I stopped the allowance.'

'Thanks,' Jack answered, nodding his head. 'That is precisely what I thought. But the mischief of it is, you see, that the man's tale may be true in his eyes. He may believe that he was blackmailing you. And therefore, since we cannot absolutely refute his story, it is the more important that we should show as good a case as possible *aliunde*. Nor does it make any difference,' Jack continued drily, 'that the man, after seeing Lord Dynmore last night, has taken himself off this morning.'

'What! Felton?' the rector exclaimed, coming suddenly upright.

'Yes. There is no doubt he has absconded. Bonamy's clerk has been after him all day, and has discovered that he begged half-a-crown from your curate, to whom he was seen speaking at the Top of the Town about ten this morning. Since that time he has not been seen.'

'He may turn up yet,' said the rector.

'I do not think he will,' the barrister replied, with a shrewd gleam in his eyes. 'But you must not flatter yourself that his disappearance will do you any good. Of course some people will say that he was afraid to remain and support a false statement. But more, I fear, will lean to the opinion that he was got out of the way by some one—you, for instance.'

'I see,' said Lindo slowly, after a long pause. 'Then it is the more imperative that I should not dream of resigning.'

'Certainly,' said Jack. 'It would be madness.'

CHAPTER XX.

A SUDDEN CALL.

DAINTRY was sitting in the dining-room a few mornings after the bazaar. She looked up from her Ollendorf, as her sister entered the room about some housekeeping matter; and, more for the sake of wasting a moment than for any other reason, attacked her. 'Kate,' she said with a yawn, 'are you never going to see old Peggy Jones again? I am sure that you have not been near her for a fortnight?'

'I ought to go, I know,' Kate answered, pausing by the side-board, with a big bunch of keys dangling from her fingers and an absent expression in her grey eyes. 'I have not been for some time.'

'I should think you had not!' Daintry retorted with severity. 'You have hardly been out of the house the last four days.'

A faint colour stole into the elder girl's face, and, seeming suddenly to recollect what she wanted, she turned and began to search in the drawer behind her. She knew quite well that what Daintry said was true—that she had not been out for four days. Jack had delivered the rector's message to her, and she had listened with downcast eyes and grave composure—a composure so perfect that even the messenger who held the clue in his hand was almost deceived by it. All the same, it had made her very happy. The young rector appreciated at last the motive which had led her to give him that strange warning. He was grateful to her, and anxious to make her understand his gratitude. And while she dwelt on this with pleasure, she foresaw with a strange mingling of joy and fear, of anticipation and shrinking, that the first time she met him abroad he would strive to make it still more clear to her.

So for four days, lest she should seem even to herself to be precipitating the meeting, she had refrained from going out. Now, when Daintry remarked upon the change in her habits, she blushed at the thought that she might all the time have been exaggerating a trifle; and, though she did not go out at once, in the course of the afternoon she did issue forth, and called upon old Peggy. Coming back she had to pass through the churchyard, and there, on the very spot where she had once forced herself to address him, she met the rector.

She saw him while he was still some way off, and before he saw

her, and she looked eagerly for any trace of the trouble of the last few days. It had not changed him, outwardly, at any rate. It had rather accentuated him, she thought. He looked more boyish, more impetuous, more independent than ever, as he came swinging along, his blonde head thrown back, his eyes roving this way and that, his long skirts flapping behind him. Of defeat or humiliation he betrayed not a trace; and the girl wondered, seeing him so calm and strong, if he had really sent her that message—which seemed to have come from a man hard pressed.

A glance told her all this; and then he saw her, and, a flash of recognition sweeping across his face, quickened his steps to meet her. He seemed to be shaking hands with her before he had well considered what he would say, for when he had gone through that ceremony, and wished her 'Good morning,' he stood awkwardly silent. Then he murmured hurriedly, 'I have been waiting for some time to speak to you, Miss Bonamy.'

'Indeed?' she said calmly. She wondered at her own self-control.

'Yes,' he answered, his colour rising. 'And I could not have met you in a better place.'

'Why?' she asked. As if she did not know. The simplest woman is an actress by nature.

'Because,' he answered, 'it is well that I should do penance where I sinned. Miss Bonamy,' he continued impetuously, yet in a low voice, and with his eyes on the ground, 'I owe you a deep apology for my rude thanklessness when I met you here last. You were right and I was wrong; but if it had been the other way, still I ought not to have behaved to you as I did. I thought—that is—I——'

He faltered and stopped. He meant that he had thought that she was playing into her father's hands, but he could hardly tell her that. She understood, however, or guessed, and for the first time she blushed. 'Pray, do not say any more about it,' she said hurriedly.

'I did send you a message,' he answered.

'Oh, yes, yes,' she replied, anxious only to put an end to his apologies. 'Please think no more about it.'

'Well,' he rejoined with a smile which did not completely veil his earnestness, 'I do find it a little more pleasant to look farther back—to our Oxford visit. But you are going this way. May I turn with you?'

'I am only going home,' Kate answered coldly. He had been humble enough to her. He had said and looked all she had expected. But he was not at all the crushed, beaten man whom she had looked to meet. He was, outwardly at least, the same man who had once sought her society for a few weeks and had then slighted her and shunned her, that he might consort with the Homfrays and their class. He had not said he was sorry for *that*.

He read her tone aright, and coloured furiously, growing a thousand times more confused than before. It was on the cards that he would accept the rebuff, and leave her. Indeed, that was his first impulse. But the consciousness, which the next moment filled his mind, that he had deserved this, and perhaps the charm of her grey eyes, overcame him. 'I will come a little way with you, if you will let me,' he said, turning and walking by *her* side.

Kate's heart gave a great leap. She understood both the first thought and the second, the weaker impulse and the stronger one which mastered it, and she would not have been a woman had she not felt her triumph. She hastened to find something to say, and could think only of the bazaar. She asked him if it had been a success.

'The bazaar?' he answered. 'To tell you the truth, I am afraid I hardly know. I should say so, now you ask me, but I have not given much thought to it since. I have been too fully occupied with other things,' he added, a note of bitterness in his voice. 'Ah! Miss Bonamy,' with a fresh change of tone, 'what a good fellow your cousin is!'

'Yes, he is indeed!' she answered heartily.

'I cannot tell you,' he continued, 'what generous help and support he has given me during the last few days. He has been of the greatest possible comfort to me.'

She looked up at him impulsively. 'He is Daintry's hero,' she said.

'Yes,' he answered laughing, 'I remember that her praise made me almost jealous of him. That was when I first knew you—when I was coming to Claversham, you remember, Miss Bonamy, full of pleasant anticipations. The reality has been different. Jack has told you, of course, of Lord Dymore's strange attack upon me? But perhaps,' he added, checking himself, and glancing at her, 'I ought not to speak to you about it, as your father is acting for him.'

'I do not think he is,' she murmured, looking straight before her.

'But—it is true the only communication I have had has been from London—still I thought—I mean I was under the impression that Lord Dynmore had at once gone to your father.'

'I think he saw him at the office,' Kate answered, 'but I believe my father is not acting for him.'

'Do you know why?' asked the rector bluntly. 'Why he is not, I mean?'

'No,' she said—that and nothing more. She was too proud to defend her father, though he had let drop enough in the family circle to enable her to form her own conclusions, and she might have made out a story which would have set the lawyer in a light differing much from that in which the rector was accustomed to view him.

Reginald Lindo walked on considering the matter. Suddenly he said, 'The archdeacon thinks I ought to resign. What do you think, Miss Bonamy?'

Her heart began to beat quickly, and with good cause. He was seeking her advice! He was asking her opinion in this matter so utterly important to him, so absolutely vital! For a moment she could not speak, she was so filled with surprise. Then she said gently, her eyes on the pavement, 'I do not think I can judge.'

'But you must have heard—more I dare say than I have!' he rejoined with a forced laugh. 'Will you tell me what you think?'

She looked before her, her face troubled. Then she spoke bravely.

'I think you should judge for yourself,' she said in a low tone, full of serious feeling. 'The responsibility is yours, Mr. Lindo. I do not think that you should depend entirely on anyone's advice. I mean, you should try to do right according to your conscience—not acting hastily, but coolly, and on reflection.'

They were almost at Mr. Bonamy's door when she said this, and he traversed the remainder of the distance without speaking. At the steps he halted and held out his hand. 'Thank you,' he said simply, his eyes seeking hers for a moment and dwelling on them, a steady light in their gaze. 'I hope I shall use this advice to better purpose than the last you gave me. Good-bye.'

She bowed silently, and went in, her heart full of strange

rapture, and he turned back and walked up the street. The dusk was falling. A few yards in front of him the lame lamplighter was going his rounds, ladder on shoulder. In many of the shops the gas was beginning to gleam. The night was coming, was almost come, yet still above the houses the sky, a pale greenish blue, was bright with daylight, against which the great tower of the church stood up bulky and black. The young man was in a curious mood. Though he walked the common pavement, he felt himself, as he gazed upwards, alone with his thoughts which went back, whether he would or no, to his first evening in Claversham. He remembered how free from reproach or stumbling-blocks his path had seemed then, to what blameless ends he had in fancy devoted himself. What works of thanksgiving, small but beneficent as the tiny rills which steal downwards through the ferns to the pasture, he had planned. And in the centre of that past dream of the future he pictured now—Kate Bonamy. Well, the reality was different.

He was just beginning to wonder when he would be likely to meet her again, and to dwell with idle pleasure on some of the details of her dress and appearance, when the sudden clatter of hoofs behind him caused him to turn his head. Far down the steep street a rider had turned the corner, and was galloping up the middle of the roadway, the manner in which he urged on his pony seeming to proclaim disaster and ill news. Opposite the rector he pulled up and cried out, 'Where is the doctor's, sir?'

Lindo turned sharply round and rang the bell of the house behind him, which happened to be Gregg's. 'Here,' he said briefly. 'What is it, my man?'

'An explosion in the Big Pit at Baerton,' the man replied. He was almost blubbing with excitement and the speed at which he had come. 'There is like to be fifty killed and as many hurt, I was told,' he continued; 'but I came straight off.'

'Good heavens! when did it happen?' Lindo asked, a wave of wild excitement following his first impulse of horror.

'About an hour and a quarter ago, as near as I can say,' the messenger answered. He was merely a farm-labourer called from the plough.

Dr. Gregg was out, and the clergyman walked by the side of the horseman, a crowd gathering behind him as the news spread, to the house of Mr. Keogh, the other doctor, who fortunately lived

close by. He was at home, and, the messenger going in to tell him the particulars, in five minutes he had his gig at the door. The rector, who had gone in too, came out with him, and, without asking leave, climbed to the seat beside him.

‘What is this?’ said the surgeon, turning to him sharply. He was an elderly man, stout and white-haired. ‘Are you coming, too, Mr. Lindo?’

‘I think so,’ the rector answered. ‘There may be cases in which you can do little and I much. Mr. Walker, the vicar of Baerton, is ill in bed, I know; and as the news has come to me first, I think I ought to go.’

‘Right you are!’ said Mr. Keogh gruffly, yet with a shrug of the shoulders. ‘Let go!’

In another moment the fast-trotting cob was whirling the two men down the street. They turned the corner sharply, and as the breeze met them on the bridge, compelling Lindo to turn up the collar of his coat and draw the rug more closely round him, the church clock in the town behind them struck the half-hour. ‘Half-past five,’ said the rector. The surgeon did not answer. They were in the open country now, the hedges speeding swiftly by them in the light of the lamps, and the long outline of Baer Hill, a huge misshapen hump which rose into a point at one end, lying dim and black before them. A night drive is always impressive. In the gloom, in the sough of the wind, in the sky serenely star-lit, or a tumult of hurrying clouds, in the rattle of the wheels, in the monotonous fall of the hoofs, there is an appeal to the sombre side of man. How much more is this the case when the sough of the wind seems to the imagination a cry of pain, and the night is a dark background on which the fancy paints dying faces! At such a time the cares of life, which day by day rise one beyond another and prevent us dwelling over-much on the end, sink into pettiness, leaving us face to face with weightier issues.

‘There have been accidents here before?’ the clergyman asked, after a long silence.

‘Thirty-five years ago there was one!’ his companion answered, with a groan which betrayed his apprehensions. ‘Good heavens, sir, I remember it now! I was young then and fresh from the hospitals; but it was almost too much for me!’

‘I hope that this one has been exaggerated,’ Lindo replied, entering fully into the other’s feelings. ‘I did not quite under-

stand the man's account; but, as far as I could follow it, one of the two shafts—the downcast shaft I think he said—was choked by the explosion, and rendered quite useless.'

'Just what I expected!' ejaculated his companion.

'So that they could only reach the workings through the up-cast shaft, in which they had rigged up some temporary lifting gear.'

'Ay, and it is the deepest pit here,' the surgeon chimed in, as the horse began to breast the steeper part of the ascent, and the furnace fires, before and above them, began to flicker and glow, now sinking into darkness, now flaming up like beacon-lights. 'The workings are two thousand feet below the surface, man!'

'Stop!' Lindo said. 'Here is some one looking for us, I think.'

Two women with shawls over their heads came to the side of the gig. 'Be you the doctors?' one of them said, peering in. Keogh answered that they were, and then in another minute the two were following her up the side of the cutting which here confined the road. The hillside gained, they were hurried through the darkness round pit-banks and slag-heaps, and under cranes and ruinous sinking walls, and over and under mysterious obstacles, sometimes looming large in the gloom and sometimes lying unseen at their feet—until they emerged at length with startling abruptness into a large circle of dazzling light. Four great fires were burning close together, and round them, motionless and for the most part silent, in appearance almost apathetic, stood hundreds of dark shadows—men and women waiting for news.

The silence and inaction of so large a crowd struck a chill to Lindo's heart. A tremor ran through him as he advanced with his companion towards a knot of a dozen rough fellows who stood together, some half-stripped, some muffled up in pilot-jackets or coarse shiny clothes. The crowd seemed to be watching them, and they spoke now and then to one another in a desultory expectant fashion, from which he judged they were persons in authority.

'It is a bad job—a very bad job!' his companion the doctor was saying nervously, when his attention, which had strayed for a moment, returned to its duty. 'Is there anything I can do yet?'

'Well, that depends, doctor,' answered one of the men, whose manner of speaking proved that he was not a mere working collier. 'There is no one up yet,' he explained, eyeing the doctor dubiously. 'But it does not exactly follow that you can do nothing. Some of us have just come up, and there is a shift of

men exploring down there now. Three bodies have been recovered, and they are at the foot of the shaft; and three poor fellows have been found alive, of whom one has since died. The other two are within fifty yards of the shaft, and as comfortable as we can make them. But they are bad—too bad to come up in a bucket; and we can rig up nothing bigger at present, so there they are fixed. The question is, will you go down to them?’

Mr. Keogh’s face fell. He shook his head. He was no longer young, and to descend a sheer depth of six hundred yards in a bucket dangling at the end of a makeshift rope was not in his line. ‘No, thank you,’ he said, ‘I could not do it, indeed.’

‘Come, doctor,’ the man persisted—he was the manager of a neighbouring colliery, as Lindo learned afterwards, ‘you will be there in no time.’

‘Just so,’ said the surgeon dryly. ‘I have no doubt I should go down fast enough. It is the coming back is the rub, you see, Mr. Peat. No, thank you, I could not.’

But the other still urged him. ‘These poor fellows are about as bad as they can be, and you know if the mountain will not go to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain.’

‘I know; and if it were a mountain, well and good,’ Mr. Keogh answered, smiling in sickly fashion as his eye strayed to a black well-like hole close at hand—a mere hole in some loose planks surmounted by a windlass and fringed with ugly wreckage. ‘But it is not. It is quite the other thing, you see.’

Mr. Peat shrugged his shoulders, and glanced at his companions rather in sorrow than surprise. Lindo, standing behind the doctor, saw the look. Till then he had stood silent. Now he pressed forward. ‘Did I hear you say that one of the injured men died after he was found?’ he asked.

‘Yes, that is so,’ the manager answered, looking keenly at him, and wondering who he was.

‘The others who are hurt—are their lives in danger?’

‘I am afraid so,’ the man replied reluctantly.

‘Then I have a right to be with them,’ the rector answered quickly. ‘I am a clergyman, and I have hastened here, fearing this might be the case. But I have also attended an ambulance class, and I can dress a burn. Besides, I am a younger man than our friend here, and, if you will let me down, I will go.’

‘By George, sir!’ the manager exclaimed, looking round for approval and smiting his thigh heavily, ‘you are a man as well as

a parson, and down you shall go, and thank you! You may make the men more comfortable, and any way you will put heart into them, for you have some to spare yourself. As for danger, there is none!—Jack!—this in a louder voice to some one in the back-ground—‘just twitch that rope! And get that tub up, will you? Look slippery now.’

Lindo felt a hand on his arm, and, obeying the silent gesture of the nearest gaunt figure, stepped aside. In a twinkling the man stripped off the parson’s long coat and put on him the pilot-jacket from his own shoulders; a second man gave him a peaked cap of stiff leather in place of his soft hat; and a third fastened a pit-lamp round his neck, explaining to him how to raise the wick without unlocking the lamp, and showing him that, if it swung too much on one side or were upset, its flame would expire of itself. And upon one thing Lindo was never tired of dwelling afterwards—the kindly tact of these rough men; and how by seemingly casual words, and even touches, the roughest sought to encourage him, while ignoring the possibility of his feeling alarm.

Meanwhile Mr. Keogh, standing in a state of considerable perplexity and discomfiture where the rector had left him, heard a well-known voice at his elbow, and turned to find that Gregg had arrived. The younger doctor was not the man to be awed into silence, and, as he came up, was speaking loudly. ‘Hallo, Mr. Keogh!’ he said. ‘I heard you were before me. Have you got them all in hand? Cuts or burns mostly, eh?’

‘They are not above ground yet,’ Mr. Keogh answered. He and Gregg were not on speaking terms, but such an emergency as this was allowed to override their estrangement.

‘Oh, then we shall have to wait,’ Gregg answered, looking round on the scene with a mixture of curiosity and professional *aplomb*. ‘I wish I had spared my horse. Any other medical man here?’

‘No; and they want one of us to go down in the bucket,’ Keogh explained. ‘There are some injured men at the foot of the shaft. I have a wife and children, and I thought that perhaps you—’

‘Would not mind breaking my neck!’ Gregg retorted with decision. ‘No, thank you, not for me! I hope to have a wife and children some day, and I will keep my neck for them. Go down!’ he repeated, looking round with extreme scorn. ‘Pooh! No one can expect us to do it! It is these people’s business, and

they are used to it; but there is not a sane man in the kingdom, besides, would go down that place after what has just happened. It is a quarter of a mile as a stone falls, if it is an inch!’

‘It is all that,’ the other assented, feeling much relieved.

‘And a height makes me giddy,’ Dr. Gregg added.

‘I feel the same of late,’ said his elder.

‘No, every man to his trade,’ Gregg concluded, settling the matter to his satisfaction. ‘Let them bring them up, and we will doctor them. But while they are below ground—— Hallo! Who is this?’

The next moment he uttered an oath of surprise and anger. As his eye wandered round, it had lit on Lindo coming forward to the shaft; and the doctor recognised him in spite of his disguise. One look, and Gregg would cheerfully have given ten pounds either to have had the rector away, or to have arrived a little later himself. He had calculated in his own mind that, if no outsider went down, he could scarcely be blamed for taking care of himself. But, if the rector went down, the matter would wear a different aspect. And Dr. Gregg saw this so clearly that he turned pale with rage and chagrin, and swore again under his breath.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN PROFUNDIS.

THE young clergyman’s face, as he walked forward to the shaft, formed, if the truth be told, no index to his mind. For, while it remained calm and even wore a faint smile, he was inwardly conscious of a strong desire to take hold of anything which presented itself, even a straw. Nevertheless, he stepped gravely into the tub, amid a low murmur; and, clutching the iron bar above it, felt himself at a word of command lifted gently into the air, and swung over the shaft. For an uncomfortable five seconds or so he remained stationary; then there was a jerk—another—and the dark figures, the line of faces, and the glare of the fires leapt suddenly above his head. He found himself in darkness dropping through space with a swift, sickening motion, as of one falling away from himself. His heart rose into his throat. There was a loud buzzing in his ears, and still above this he heard the dull rattling sound of the rope being paid out. Every other

sense was spent in the stern grip of his hands on the bar above his head.

The horrible sensation of falling lasted for a few seconds only. It passed away. He was no longer in space with nothing stable about him, but in a small tub at the end of a tough rope. Except for a slight swaying motion, he hardly knew that he was still descending; and presently a faint light, more diffused than his own lamp, grew visible. Then he came gently to a standstill, and some one held up a lantern to his face. With difficulty he made out two huge figures standing beside him, who laid hold of the tub and pulled it towards them until it rested on something solid. 'You are welcome,' one growled, as, aided by a hand of each, Lindo stepped out. 'You will be the doctor, I suppose, master? Well, this way. Catch hold of my jacket.'

Lindo obeyed, being only too glad of the help thus given him; for though the men seemed to move about with ease and certainty, he could make out nothing but shapeless gloom. 'Now you sit right down there,' continued the collier, when they had walked a few yards, 'and you will get the sight of your eyes in a bit.'

He did as he was bid; and one by one the objects about him became visible. His first feeling was one of astonishment. He had put a quarter of a mile of solid earth between himself and the sunlight, and still, for all he could see, he might be merely in a cellar under a street. He found himself seated on a rough bench, in a low-roofed, windowless, wooden cabin, strangely resembling a very dirty London office in a fog. True, everything was black—very black. On another bench, opposite him, sat the two colliers who had received him, their lamps between their knees. His first impulse was to tell them hurriedly that he was not the doctor. 'I am afraid you are disappointed,' he added, 'but I hope one will follow me down. I am a clergyman, and I want to do something for these poor fellows, if you will take me to them.'

The two men betrayed no surprise, but he who had spoken before quietly poked up the wick of his lamp and held the lantern up so as to get a good view of his face. 'Ay, ay,' he said, nodding, as he lowered it again. 'I thought you weren't unbeknown to me. You are the parson we fetched to poor Jim Lucas a while ago. Well, Jim will have a rare cageful of his friends with him to-night.'

The rector shuddered. Such apathy, such matter-of-factness was new to him. But though his heart sank as the collier rose and, swinging his lamp in his hand, passed through the doorway,

he made haste to follow him; and the man's next words, 'You had best look to your steps, master, for there is a deal of rubbish come down'—pointing as they did to a material danger—brought him, in the diversion of his thoughts, something like relief.

The road on which he found himself, being the main heading or highway of the pit, was a good and wide one. It was even possible to stand upright in it. Here and there, however, it was partially blocked by falls of coal caused by the explosion, and over one of these his guide put out his hand to assist him. Lindo's lamp was by this time burning low. The pitman silently took it and raised the wick, a grim smile distorting his face as he handed it back. 'You will be about the first of the gentry,' he muttered, 'as has been down this pit without paying his footing.'

Lindo took the words for a hint, and was shocked by the man's insensibility. 'My good fellow,' he answered, 'if that is all, you shall have what you like another time. But for heaven's sake let us think of these poor fellows now.'

The man turned on him suddenly and swore aloud. 'Do you think I meant that?' he cried, with another violent oath.

The rector recoiled, not at the sound of the man's profanity, but in disgust at his own mistake. Then he held out his hand. 'My man,' he said, 'I beg your pardon. It was I who was wrong. I did not understand you.'

The giant looked at him with another stare, but made no answer, and a dozen steps brought them to a second cabin. Across the doorway—there was no door—hung a rough curtain of matting. This the man raised, and, holding his lamp over the threshold, invited the rector to look in. 'I guess,' he added significantly, 'that you would not have made that mistake, master, after seeing this.'

Lindo peered in. On the floor, which was little more than six feet square, lay four quiet figures, motionless, and covered with coarse sacking. No eye falling on them could take them for anything but what they were. The visitor shuddered, as his guide let the curtain fall again, muttering, with a backward jerk of the head, 'Two of them I came down with this morning—in the cage.'

The rector had nothing to answer, and the man, preceding him to a cabin a few yards farther on, invited him by a sign to enter, and himself turned back the way they had come. A faint moaning warned Lindo, before he raised the matting, what he must

expect to see. Instinctively, as he stepped in, his eyes sought the floor; and although three pitmen crouching upon one of the benches rose and made way for him, he hardly noticed them, so occupied was he with pitiful looking at the two men lying on coarse beds on the floor. They were bandaged and muffled almost out of human form. One of them was rolling his sightless face monotonously to and fro, pouring out an unceasing stream of delirious talk. The other, whose bright eyes met the newcomer's with eager longing, paused in the murmur which seemed to ease his pain, and whispered, 'Doctor!' so hopefully that the sound went straight to Lindo's heart.

To undecieve him, and to explain to the others that he was not the expected surgeon, was a bitter task with which to begin his ministrations; but he was greatly cheered to find that, even in their disappointment, they took his coming as a kindly thing, and eyed him with surprised gratitude. He told them the latest news from the bank—that a cage would be rigged up in a few hours at farthest—and then, conquering his physical shrinking, he knelt down by the least injured man and tried to turn his surgical knowledge to account. It was not much he could do, but it eased the poor man's present sufferings. A bandage was laid more smoothly here, a little cotton-wool readjusted there, a change of posture managed, a few hopeful words uttered which helped the patient to fight against the shock—so that presently he sank into a troubled sleep. Lindo tried to do his best for the other also, terrible as was the task; but the man's excitement and unceasing restlessness, as well as his more serious injuries, made help here of little avail.

When he rose, he found one of the watchers holding a cup of brandy ready for him; and, sitting down upon the bench behind, he discovered a coat laid there to make the seat more comfortable, though no one seemed to have done it, or to be conscious of his surprise. They talked low to him, and to one another, in a disjointed taciturn fashion, with immense gaps and long intervals of silence. He learned that there were twenty-seven men yet missing, but it was thought that the afterdamp had killed them all. Those already found alive had been in the main heading, where the current of air gave them a better chance.

One or other of the workers was continually going out to listen for the return of the party who were exploring the workings near the foot of the other shaft; and once or twice

a member of this party, exhausted or ill, looked in for a dose of tea or brandy, and then stumbled out again to get himself conveyed to the upper air. These looked curiously at the stranger, but, on some information being muttered in their ears, made a point on going out of giving him a nod which was full of tacit acknowledgment.

In a quiet interval he looked at his watch and wound it up, finding the time to be half-past two. The familiar action carried his mind back to his neat spotless bedroom at the rectory and the cares and anxieties of everyday life, which had been forgotten for the last five hours. Could it be so short a time, he asked himself, since he was troubled by them? It seemed years ago. It seemed as if a gulf, deep as the shaft down which he had come, divided him from them. And yet the moment his thoughts returned to them the gulf became less, and presently, although his eyes were still fixed upon the poor collier's unquiet head and the murky cabin with its smoky lamp, he was really back in Claversham, busied with those thoughts again, and pondering on the time when he should be above ground. The things that had been important before rose into importance again, but their relative values were altered, in his eyes at any rate. With what he had seen and heard in the last few hours fresh in his mind, with the injured men lying still in his sight—one of them never to see the sun again—he could not but take a different, a wider, a less selfish view of life and its aims. His ideal of existence grew higher and purer, his notion of success more noble. In the light of his own self-forgetting energy and of others' pain he saw things as they affected his neighbour rather than himself; and so presently—not in haste, but slowly, in the watches of the night—he formed a resolution which shall be told presently. The determinations to which men come at such times are, in nine cases out of ten, as transitory as the emotions on which they are based. But this time, and with this man, it was not to be so. Kate Bonamy's words, bringing before his mind the responsibility which rested upon him, had in a degree prepared him to examine his position gravely and from a lofty standpoint; so that the considerations which now occurred to him could scarcely fail to have due and lasting weight with him, and to leave impressions both deep and permanent.

He was presently roused from his reverie by a sound which caused his companions to rise to their feet and exhibit, for the

first time, some excitement. It was the murmur of voices in the heading, which, beginning far away, rapidly approached and gathered strength. Going to the door of the cabin, he saw lights in the gallery becoming each instant more clear. Then the forms of men coming on by twos and threes rose out of the darkness. And so the procession wound in, and Lindo found himself suddenly surrounded—where a moment before no sounds but painful ones had been heard—by the hum and bustle, the quick questions and answers, of a crowd. For the men brought good news. The missing were found. Though many of them were burned or scorched, and others were suffering from the effects of the afterdamp, the explorers brought back with them no still, ominous burden, nor even any case of hopeless injury, such as that of the poor fellow in delirium over whom his mates bent with the strange impassive patience which seems to be a quality peculiar to those who get their living underground.

Not that Lindo at the time had leisure to consider their behaviour. The injured were brought to him as a matter of course, and he did what he could with simple bandages and liniment to keep the air from their wounds, and to enable the men to reach the surface with as little pain as possible. For more than an hour, as he passed from one to the other, his hands were never empty; he could think only of his work. The deputy-manager, who had been leading the rescue party, was thoroughly prostrated. The rest never doubted that the stranger was a surgeon, and it was curious to see their surprise when the general taciturnity allowed the fact that he was only a parson to leak out. They were like savants with a specimen which, known to belong to a particular species, has none of the class attributes, and sets at defiance all preconceived ideas upon the subject. He, too, when he was at length free to look about him, found matter for astonishment in his own sensations. The cabin and the roadway outside, where the men sat patiently waiting their turns to ascend, had become almost homelike in his eyes. The lounging figures here thrown into relief by a score of lamps, there lost in the gloom of the back-ground, had grown familiar. He knew that this was here and that was there, and had his receptacles and conveniences, his special attendants and helpers. In a word, he had made the place his own, yet without forgetting old habits—for more than once he caught himself looking at his watch, and wondering when it would be day.

Towards seven o'clock a message directed to him by name came down. A cage would be rigged up within the hour. Before that period elapsed, however, he was summoned to be present at the death of the poor fellow who had been delirious since he was found, and who now passed away in the same state. It was a trying scene, coming just when the clergyman's wrought-up nerves were beginning to feel a reaction—the more trying as all looked to him to do anything that could be done. But that was nothing; and he felt gravely thankful when the poor man's sufferings were over, and the throng of swarthy faces melted from the open doorway.

He sat apart a while after that, until a commotion outside the cabin and a cheery voice asking for Mr. Lindo summoned him to the door, where he found the manager who had sent him down the night before, and who now greeted him warmly. 'It is not for me to thank you,' Mr. Peat said—'I have nothing to do with this pit. The owner, to whom what has happened will be reported, will do that; but personally I am obliged to you, Mr. Lindo, and I am sure the men are.'

'I wanted only to be of help,' the clergyman answered simply. 'There was not much I could do.'

'Well, that is a matter of opinion,' the manager replied. 'I have mine, and I know that the men who have come up have theirs. However, here is the cage; perhaps you will not mind going up with poor Edwards?'

'Not at all,' said the rector; and, following the manager to the cage, he stepped into it without any suspicion that this was a trick on the part of Mr. Peat to ensure his volunteer's services being recognised.

He found the ascent a very different thing from the descent. The steady upward motion was not unpleasant, and long before the surface was reached his eyes, accustomed to darkness, detected a pale gleam of light stealing downwards, and could distinguish the damp brickwork gliding by. Presently the light grew stronger—grew dazzling in its wonderful whiteness. 'We are going up nicely,' his companion murmured, remembering in his gratitude that the ascent, which was a trifle to him even with shattered nerves, might be unpleasant to the other—'we are nearly there.'

And so they were; and slowly and gently they rose into the broad daylight and the sunshine, which seemed to proclaim to the rector's heart that sorrow may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

Standing densely packed round the pit's mouth was a great crowd—a crowd, at any rate, of many hundreds. They greeted the appearance of the cage with a quick drawing-in of the breath and a murmur of pity. Lindo's face and hands were as black as any collier's; his dress seemed at the first glance as theirs. But as he helped to lift his injured companion out and carry him to the stretcher which stood at hand, the word ran round who he was; and, though no one spoke, the loudest tribute would scarcely have been more eloquent than the respect with which the rough assemblage fell away to right and left that he might pass out to the gig which had been thoughtfully provided—first to carry him to the vicarage for a wash, and afterwards to take him home. His heart was full as he walked down the lane, every man standing uncovered, and the women gazing on him with unspoken blessings in their eyes.

A very few hours before he had felt at war with the world. He had said, not perhaps that all men were liars, but that they were unjust, full of prejudice and narrowness and ill-will; that, above all, they judged without charity. Now, as the pony-cart rattled down the road through the cutting, and the sunny landscape, the winding river, and the plain round Claversham opened before him, he felt far otherwise. He longed to do more for others than he had done. He dwelt with wonder on the gratitude which services so slight had evoked from men so rough as those from whom he had just parted. And unconsciously he placed the balance in their favour to the general account of the world, and acknowledged himself its debtor.

(To be continued.)

AFOOT.

I SUPPOSE it is a very palpable truism to aver that people do not nowadays walk anything like as much as they used to. If some doctors are to be believed, we pay for this slight to our feet by abbreviated lives; though, in the face of the repeated assurances on all sides that longevity is much more common than it was, this professional opinion is hard to credit. No doubt the shoemakers suffer by our affection for the familiar 'bus and the agile hansom, and our patronage of the malodorous underground railway. But as shoemakers exist for our convenience, and not *vice versa*, we may be cold-blooded enough to say that this fact is not a very alarming one for the world in general.

During undergraduate days, and indeed up to the age of thirty or so, there are times when we are imperatively compelled to take to our legs as a relief to our feelings. Who has not felt this? It may be anxiety about the examinations (a foolish and unphilosophic state of mind!), or the more than common realisation that there are more unpaid bills on the mantelpiece than papa's allowance can settle in five years; or one's head may be a little befogged, due to the bad wine of that fellow in the rooms below; or Cupid (impudent little wretch!) may have shot an arrow into one's heart, and set one's whole corporation at discord with itself.

Under these circumstances, really and truly it is well to put on one's thickest boots, take a clublike stick, and stride away anywhere, without heed of weather, mile-stones, or compass. It doesn't matter in the least which way you go. The thing you have to do is to walk yourself into a state of bodily collapse, or something like it. Then it will be time enough to look at your watch, and make for the nearest inn. No doubt, if you are a long way from a railway-station (a most improbable thing!), there will be a dog-cart in the village. If not, still, you may rest a while, drink some beer, smoke a cigar, snap your fingers at black care, and then set off to try and retrace your steps. The odds are fifty to one you don't succeed without a most fatiguing amount of interrogation of rustics. By that time you will be sweetly exhausted—you will, in fact, have done precisely what your humour bade you do. And afterwards, neither the sheaf of

tradesmen's bills, nor Cupid, nor the fumes of indifferent claret, nor all the examiners in Christendom shall be able, for a while, to disturb your spirits.

It was in some such mental stir as this that Christopher North made his phenomenal tramp from the west end of London to Oxford one night. He got into his rooms before some of his friends were breakfasting—nor do we hear that he was remarkably tired. But then he was a very Titan of pedestrianism. He would set off for a forty-mile walk, giving but eight hours to it, as you or I might begin a constitutional of five or six miles. Once he trusted to his legs to take him from Liverpool to his sweet lake-land home of Ellera. This is seventy or eighty miles of going, up hill and down dale; yet he did it within four-and-twenty hours. Walking Stewart himself was, no doubt, a fine friend to cobblers; but it is odd if Professor Wilson, of Edinburgh and Ellera, was not his superior at long distances.

Yet, spite of all his athletic vigour and strength, Wilson did not live to be a septuagenarian. The discreet clubman of Piccadilly, who begins to be old at forty-five or fifty, and ever afterwards walks like a snail, with one hand in the small of his back and the other on his stick, lives to be ninety without much of an effort; while the athlete of world-wide fame dies ere he reaches the common limit of our days. No wonder sensational feats in pedestrianism excite the admiration rather than the emulation of the majority of us.

From eighteen to thirty, or thereabouts, seems to be the period during which we may do pretty much as we please with impunity—whether in walking or aught else. Certainly these are the days which rivet our affections upon moors and mountains, and when we find the devious and rocky banks of the trout-streams not a bit too devious and rocky. Our British mountains are not much to boast about; but there is something very exhilarating in the spirits of half-a-dozen youths who find themselves on the summit of Helvellyn or Scaw Fell for the first time. They think they have done a wonderful thing. They open their sandwich packets and draw the corks of their bottles, toast the mountain air and the prospect, and end by casting stones at the unfortunate bottles which have provided them with sustenance. So, too, among the heather. When one's sinews are supple and lungs irreproachable, there seems no limit to the number of miles a pair of legs will carry one. Rain and mist are of no account as

obstacles. We are told in the North that the softer the weather the healthier it is; and we are then willing enough to believe the doctrine. The trout confirm us in our fancy that wet weather is as good as Italian skies. We fill all our pockets with them; and anon, when the day is well on the wane, it is nothing to our legs that they have to bear an added burden of twenty or thirty pounds of fish to our destination for the night.

I have in my mind while I write memories of walks in different parts of the world, in Greece and Italy as well as in the Highlands, in several of the States of America, in Africa, and in six or seven of the islands of the Mediterranean. Of all these walks the British take the fairest colouring in the mirror of retrospect. Elsewhere the sun was nearly always a trial, often an agony. In the lower latitudes you cannot rest at full length on mother earth with anything like the assurance Great Britain affords of immunity from the annoyances of ants and worse things than ants. To talk of cloudy skies and green fields is to babble about what we are all familiar with; but there is assuredly nothing in the wide world that appeals so successfully to English hearts as our English landscapes. The Swiss mountains and glens are, no doubt, surpassingly fine; but we stand in their presence as a humble person may be supposed to stand before his country's sovereign surrounded by regal power and splendour. It is very exciting and magnificent, but it does not put us quite at our ease. On the other hand, the bosses of elms and oaks in an ordinary English valley, the red-roofed houses with a brown crocketed church spire in their midst, the shining river, the green meadows, and the fields of divers hues, with the medley of clouds overhead—these are what one loves, even as one loves one's armchair or the pipe which has been the confidant of one's anxieties and hopes this many a year.

Long distances afoot seem a mistake, unless necessity is the spur. If we lived a thousand years apiece, instead of barely a hundred, it might be otherwise. As it is, however, such feats are only for the man who finds ordinary life uncongenial. I know a couple of Oxonians who had good sport as travelling tinkers for a month of the long vacation. They paid their way by tinkering (very badly, no doubt), by singing comic songs in innocent, sequestered villages, and even by agitating as political demagogues. The 'three acres and a cow' catch served them with endless material for stump-oratory. Sometimes they were posed by the blunt

interrogations of the village-inn politicians, who thought their roseate Radicalism just a little too roseate. But these impertinences they could easily dispose of by some irrelevant witticism, or by some such trick of dialectics as Plato and the other ancients might have been thanked for. As may be imagined, they had plenty of chances of fun. I am afraid to say how many village beauties they claimed to have kissed. They balanced accounts for mended kettles and saucepans in this way—much, I should suppose, to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, including the next itinerant tinker who chanced to pass over the ground they had traversed. But after a month they tired of the life; and so they stored their implements in a rustic barn, and took the train home to their distressed parents, who fancied they were all the time engaged in something vastly more nefarious. But they did not tell their anxious sires that, so far from being extravagant, they had been leading lives of ridiculous cheapness. Else, in all probability, the old gentlemen would have done their utmost to persuade them to spend all their vacations in so exemplary and educative a manner.

The other day I heard from a correspondent of an unfortunate pedestrian who started, almost alone, upon a walk of 950 miles in Central Africa. One is used to long distances in that part of the world—or, at least, to hearing and reading about them. It seems to us islanders, however, as if they were ordinarily so contrived that a walk of from five to ten miles per diem was reckoned a very fair achievement. Perhaps it is, when brushes with pigmies and other inimical natives, wide rivers full of hippopotami and crocodiles, primeval forests, and that sort of thing, are the various impediments to progress: not to mention the trials which health has to suffer, and the hardships the stomach has to endure as best it may.

This pedestrian, however, was a missionary, not an accredited explorer. He set off in all the sublime self-confidence of his ignorance, and with a very fair wallet of hopes in his heart. But ere he had covered thirty miles of the 950, he was knocked down by dysentery. He forgot that he was not in England, where one may walk with impunity at noon in the dog days. Sunstroke also touched him, and it was in this melancholy plight that my Central African correspondent found him one evening. He died in the night at 1 A.M., and my friend duly buried him at 9 A.M.

What can be more recklessly imprudent than the proverbial

folly of our middle-aged countrymen who take the mail train to Bâle, and so contrive it that, within thirty hours of the time when they sat at their desks in the City, they are planning an ascent of one of the most laborious peaks in all Switzerland. Does not one know the kind of people? Why, I have met them on the Welsh mountains in a state of absolute exhaustion, with reeling limbs and not a puff of breath left in their bodies. They have petitioned for a taste of my whisky-flask, much as a notorious sinner might on his death-bed ask the clergyman to save him from the consequences of his various misdemeanours. Whisky in such a case is wasted: it does them more harm than good. All they need to do is to lie on their backs in the heather until they feel a little better, and then creep down to the lowlands again, looking as ashamed of themselves as they ought to feel. They would do well, in future, to husband their self-respect by consecrating the first few days of their holiday to a gentle and methodical totter up and down the promenade of some salubrious seaside resort. Afterwards they may venture to tackle hills a thousand or two feet high without much risk to their hearts.

I rather think the fair sex in England may claim to be better average walkers than their brothers and husbands. This is a bold affirmation, and yet it seems justifiable. They are not so prone to call a hansom in town when they feel tired. On they trudge until they are, as they say, 'ready to drop.' Often, indeed, they do drop—into a policeman's hands, in their misjudged attempts to cross Regent's Circus, when in this condition of incipient breakdown. Their pluck is marvellous. A glass of milk and a doughy bun will enable them to keep moving for an indefinite number of hours. As for the afterwards—well, it may take care of itself. But I must say I have heard awful language of a kind from the lips of two ladies—sisters—who have been compelled to spend the evening together after a day of such strenuous exertions. It made them seem much less amiable than they really were.

Our friends across the Channel make much of this *penchant* for pedestrianism among our British girls. They belie their reputation for courtesy by the frequency with which they caricature, on the boards of their inferior theatres, the style and manners of our aunts out for a holiday. Goths though we Britons undoubtedly are in some particulars, we do not hold up to ridicule the female relations of the French. They are far from immaculate, but we take mercy on them, and leave them and their imperfec-

tions very much alone. Yet this does not hinder them from making merry over the impossible antics and imbecility of the comic persons who dress up as the English travelling 'mees' in a long chessboard ulster, with ringlets, spectacles, an alpenstock, and a phrase-book.

The truth is, I believe, that they are jealous of the vigour and independence of our girls. These, moreover, possess such muscles to their legs as they can never have. It is an inherited faculty with them—the outcome of free association with brothers in the time of childhood and youth, of district visiting, climate, and much else. There was a certain amount of chivalry in the conception of the incident in the French play which showed us an English walking-lady carrying a tired foreigner in her arms down one of the high Alps. It was an absurd situation, of course; but not a bit more absurd than the eternal spectacled spinster who strides over Europe in her tiresome ulster.

I know a man who took his wife to Iceland for the honeymoon, and camped out, and climbed Hecla during this period of exuberant happiness. On the top of Hecla whom should he meet but a couple of Frenchmen with guns on their backs, and quite in the humour to flirt with any pretty woman, whether newly-wed or not. All four made acquaintance, and enjoyed a brief talk in the desert. But when it transpired that Iceland and Hecla were a British idea of the *lune de miel*, the one Frenchman fled laughing to his tent, and his friend, perforce, with an apologetic shrug of his shoulders, followed him. These two men subsequently mentioned the incident as the most remarkable that occurred to them during a six weeks' tour in the island. The desolation of the north coast, the geysers, the lonesome valleys, and even the reindeer they shot, were all trivial to it.

Someone has said that the Germans beat the French in 1870 because they possessed superior walking powers. One need not altogether believe this. Yet there does seem to have been a measure of sense in it. There was no end to the pluck of the Westphalians and Saxons in trudging up and down the hills round Metz when they pressed upon Bazaine and his red-legged troops. This, too, in mid-August, which is as warm in the land of the Moselle as an average day in Bombay! But the valorous Teutons did not faint by the way, and only the most meagre proportion of them dreamed of falling out for a minute or two, unless they were wounded. They owed it to their lusty physique, and

that, in turn, they owed to their sobriety and their boyish habits of pedestrianism. The enthusiastic professors who lead their pupils into the Hartz mountains or the Black Forest during a vacation deserve well of their country. In their blue veils and spectacles, with their paraphernalia of hammers, tin-boxes, and butterfly-nets they may seem to us as comical as my newly-married friends on Hecla seemed to the Frenchmen. But what need they care for that? True contentment, we all know, comes from within, not from things and persons external. And it is necessary only to glance at the faces of professor and flock to realise that they are in no discontented mood.

To the man who does not walk, about half of Great Britain is like a sealed book. He may read descriptions of those parts, but he can never hope to behold them with the eyes of sense.

Take the coast by the Land's End, for example. It provides a number of alluring sensations for the pedestrian. The headland itself was probably as accessible a century ago as it is to-day. There is no railway thither—a mercy for which the modern person of sentiment cannot be sufficiently grateful. Coaches traverse the high road, and convey the conventional tourist to a hotel where he may have a meal, a bed, and a bill as elsewhere. But it is an extremely dull high road. Its ten miles of length from Penzance are for the most part through a level, hedgeless country of poor pasture, stone walls, and patches of gorse and heath.

Contrast this with the coast route. We skirt granite cliffs hundreds of feet perpendicular, at the base of which the blue Atlantic breaks with a fine splutter, and cross rugged little inlets cumbered with granite boulders rounded by the waves into the aspect of marbles fit for Titans. Here is no carriage-way. It is much too remote for the more valetudinarian of tourists. There are no houses of refreshment to tempt the traveller to be enjoyably indolent. Vipers are common objects in the long grass, at the head of the more sheltered coves. You may find half a vessel in another recess, with a litter of iron rods and splintered spars alongside it—maybe even a drowned seaman prone upon the smoothed granite pebbles. This year, at any rate, you will find dead starlings by the thousand. They died on the coast in the snow of March. Spent with fatigue after crossing the Channel with empty stomachs, they dropped here in hosts. In places they were a foot deep. The gulls and others who thought to make meals of them found them not worth the picking.

These sights and discoveries are for the pedestrian alone. Even the cyclist, hardy invader of byeways though he may be, cannot make much of our Cornish coast.

Our finest memories of landscapes are those we gain afoot. The eye has then time to look and look until the scene is registered on the brain. Twenty years later, you can recall it without much effort. On the other hand, you cross the St. Gothard by railway. Here you are in the midst of chaotic rocks with waterfalls and mountains and precipices all about you of the kind your fellow-travellers salute with many an enraptured 'Goodness gracious!' Yet, though the train does not move very fast, it moves too fast for your brain. A year later, unless you are uncommonly retentive of impressions, the St. Gothard will be a very incoherent memory to you.

That is why I, for one, am never satisfied unless I can spend some hours afoot in any famous place to which my inclination may have led me. Each jog-trot movement seems to act like those machines of Mr. Edison in registering the detail of an impression.

I have mentioned the Cornish coast as an excellent field for the man who has faith in his legs. Anglesey also may, for its comparative remoteness and interest (though of a different kind), be bracketed with it. The scenery here is not sensational. But it looks across the Menai Strait at the boldest grouping of mountains we possess south of the Grampians. From the royal village of Aberffraw (where for centuries the old kings of Wales had their palace), now half-choked in sand, the Cambrian hills, from Penmaenmawr to Bardsey, are a delightful spectacle, with Snowdon distinctly the master.

These sands of Anglesey are for the pedestrian alone. The south-west waves roar over them with tremendous force, and the wind lifts them and whirls them in one's face with a heartiness which makes one think of a simoom in the Sahara. On the southern side of the inlet of Malldraeth, for instance, is an area of ten or twelve miles wholly resigned to sand, rabbits, and the rare plants which flourish amid the sand-grasses and the salt winds. It is called Newborough Warren, and is a fair sample of the shores of Medoc, where the sands thus overwhelm the country as heralds of the sea itself. In the midst of this baleful expanse stands the town of Newborough, one of the most populous in all Anglesey, with its precise thoroughfares teeming with children. Some hundreds of years ago, Newborough was known as Rhosfair or Rhoshir

('the tiresome waste'). Then it became the representative city of the island, and sent the county member to Westminster. But the progress of the sand-invasion has never ceased, and the town is doomed to eventual suffocation. Half the parish is already under sand. Three centuries hence its chimney pots may mark the sepulchre of the rest of the town.

In the north-west of the same island the man afoot will be quaintly gratified with his experiences. You do not see such farmhouses elsewhere in the land. They are plain enough, set square upon the ground, but remarkable for their complexions. One building is a blinking white, every inch of it—slate roof, chimney pots, and even the grey stones of its encircling walls. Another has a white body, with windows a dark green, or a vivid yoke-of-egg yellow. Here, again, is a porch with a lintel of red bricks and mortar, the bricks freshly painted a bright vermilion, and the very mortar between the bricks whitewashed to emphasise the effect. In this part of Anglesey the stranger is still looked upon with curious eyes, and the Englishman retains in some degree his old character of the marauding Saxon, prone to indulge in all manner of oppressions and impertinences. The farm-lasses greet him with pleasure and sprightliness, as if he were a handsome and generous highwayman in a shallow disguise. But the rustics, hodding turnips, rest on their staves, and seem prepared to act on the defensive, while eyeing him uneasily, and discussing him with lightning-flashes of native speech until he has passed pacifically out of sight.

North, south, east, and west, there are many other fascinating spots about our land which are worth investigating, and to which not even the millionaire, with his chariot and horses at a thousand guineas the pair, can get access, unless he walks. The man with stout calves to his legs is lord of himself like any philosopher. Surely, therefore, we shall do well to inculcate the habit of walking at least as earnestly as any other form of athletics. It may be good to have gigantic biceps. It is certainly more useful to have legs capable of endurance.

To become an enthusiastic pedestrian it is not essential to have, like Professor Wilson, the epidermis to one's heel of peculiar thickness. A little energy and strength, and the necessary amount of will, are enough to begin with. Practice will, of course, increase all three considerably. Longevity cannot fail to follow. The professional tramp, like the common domestic donkey, is as nearly immortal as he need be.

THE WAIFS OF WIND CREEK.

I.

FOR about fifty miles from its source, Wind Creek runs almost due south, following down the west side of the eastern spur of the Rockies, or, to speak more accurately, the 'foothills'—for although many of the peaks in the spur rise to a considerable altitude, and the greater portion of the 'divide' is inaccessible, still they are dwarfed, and their height made comparatively insignificant, by the gigantic crests beyond to the westward.

The course of the creek is tortuous and meandering; as though in its original descent it had turned aside to look into every gap and scissure in the hope of finding an outlet to the plains, and freedom. But, like many of the ways of men, its career had been pre-ordained: it might just as well have taken a perfectly straight course parallel with the divide, and so have saved many unnecessary disappointments.

And after all, at last having found the looked-for cañon, it has perforce to join hands with the Lesser Bear Creek; and again, a few miles farther on, the identity of both is sunk in the waters of the Maple River. The Maple River, in its turn, does not run for more than a hundred miles out on the arid plains before it 'runs under' in the sand, and ceases to exist. How many other little lives are mirrored in the history of this little stream?

It was to this locality, perhaps never before trodden by the foot of the white hunter, that two men had come in the early spring. About a mile above the juncture of the two streams, and up to the westward, on Bear Creek, they had thrown together a little shanty, half *adobe*, half log, in which they had just commenced to 'keep house,' with the intention of trapping and poisoning those animals upon which the Territory paid a 'bounty'—bears, mountain-lions, wild cats, wolves, &c.; with perhaps an occasional eagle, and the larger hawks: for on these birds there was a bounty also. They would occupy the summer in this way, perhaps with considerable profit, until the fur season again came round.

Dave, the elder of the two men, had been a widower for many years, and was an old frontiersman. He had never told his partner how he had lost his wife; nor had he spoken of any children,

though he once had been the happy father of three. Although his wife had been a half-breed, he had an inexorable hatred of Indians.

Jim, his partner, was a widower also ; his little girl, four years old, was now with them, and was by no means the least important of the household. It was about the middle of the afternoon, a week or so after their arrival :

'You stay with the "Kid," said Dave, 'and see about fixing supper, while I go down the creek to where we killed that black-tail, and stick some poison out. Likely I may's well take the bear-trap along, in case of sign.'

On the previous day they had killed a 'black-tail,' and, having of course taken nothing but the 'saddle' for their use, it was highly probable that there would be some 'sign' (perhaps of bear) round the remaining carcass.

'It *is* set,' replied Jim, referring to the trap : by which he did not mean that it was actually set, but that the ponderous springs were already levered down, and the rings pushed up upon them, so that one man, without the assistance of a lever, could accomplish the ultimate setting.

A powerful-looking engine of destruction is a bear-trap. In addition to the strong jaws, like a giant ordinary 'gin,' with a spring at either end, there are three exceedingly valid hooks, one on either end of the jaws, and one in the middle, which effectually prevent the unfortunate captive from twisting round ; by which means it might otherwise twist its leg off or break the trap. Then there is the short stout chain attached to a heavy log : the chain must not be too long, otherwise if a grizzly be caught by the fore-leg he will stand up against a tree and with a few powerful strokes shatter the trap to fragments, and be free ; again, if the log were not used but the chain made fast to something immovable, a few twists and the ponderous strength of a grizzly would snap the stoutest chain—especially if the bear were taken by a hind-leg. Though the trap may be dragged a long distance, of course the track of the trailing log may easily be followed.

Dave went a little way up the creek to where the horses were picketed, and taking one off the ropes brought it back to the cabin, put a pack-saddle on it, hung the trap by one of its jaws on the front cross, arranged the log on the top, slung an axe to the hind cross, threw the bridle-rein up over one of the springs of the trap, and, rifle in hand, started down the creek ; the horse following him.

Not more than a hundred yards below the junction of the two streams, he stopped the horse, dropped its bridle-reins to the ground, and proceeded cautiously on alone. He looked closely for tracks, but found nothing that looked very fresh until he came upon the carcass of the 'black-tail,' which lay in the narrowest part of the cañon, where there was no more than a space of some ten feet between the stream and the sheer perpendicular cliff; all around it there were the tracks of a large bear. The carcass was not touched—not even the head or the liver; evidently the tracks were not those of a 'cinnamon,' but of a large grizzly—yet one of those that had not learnt to eat flesh, but lived exclusively on berries, roots, and other such dainties. It was also evident that he had come from down the creek and had returned the same way.

Dave took all this in at a glance. He selected a spot a few yards down the stream, in a little cluster of red willows, to set his trap; choosing an opening about three feet wide, between the stems of two willows, through which the bear had passed both in coming and going; then, to make doubly sure, he bent and intertwined the smaller branches of the willows carelessly, in all directions, between the stream and the bluff, just sufficiently to check the progress of a suspicious animal in any direction but through the opening.

Then he returned to the horse and brought the trap and log—nearly as much as he could carry. Having scooped out a place to fit it, he stood across the trap with a foot on either jaw, and set the trigger to his liking; covered it carefully with a little earth and moss, so that all looked like the surrounding ground; passed the rings back off the springs, and then covered them and the chain carefully from sight.

All being accomplished to his satisfaction, he returned to the carcass, cut the liver into 'baits,' produced a small bottle of strychnine and dropped a few grains into each, and threw them about on the ground; then plunging his skinning-knife into the carcass in several places he poisoned that as well.

It is wonderful how careless these men become with poison. I remember one case of a fellow who carried a bottle of strychnine and his chewing-tobacco in the same pocket. One day he was found curled up (dead, of course) with his head and heels nearly touching.

Little did Dave think that for the last ten minutes or more he

had been watched from behind a rock beneath the opposite cliff by a pair of wistful and startled grey eyes. Never, in fact, had a man's movements been more keenly scrutinised than his; and those eyes belonged to the most unlikely of all things in the world to be in such a spot—a young woman.

The day was closing in.

As Dave wended his way home, a lithe figure stepped out from its hiding-place and followed cautiously along on the other side of the stream. Attired as a man, in buck-skin, or probably elk-skin, it looked like some youthful hunter: but there was a fragile grace in the gait that belied the dress. Dark wavy hair hung upon the shoulders. Every now and again the figure stopped suddenly, like some timid animal, and stood undecided; then a look of curiosity and fascination came into the eyes, and the girl (for girl it assuredly was) went cautiously forward.

Before Dave had gone far, he evidently came upon something on the ground which had before escaped his keen eye. At his feet there was a track that he could not quite make out; he turned and followed it to the creek; here, just beside the water, it was more distinct. He looked troubled and uneasy. Several large slippery boulders seemed to have been used for stepping-stones across the stream. In crossing upon them he slipped up and into the water. The girl, who watched him, laughed merrily, seemed inclined to come forward, and then shrank timidly back. Dave had noticed nothing but his own fall, and turned once more up the stream.

When he arrived at the shanty it was almost dark. Jim was busy preparing supper; and the little girl was playing with the big mongrel dog. Dave sat down before the fire with a bowl of potatoes between his knees and commenced to peel them.

'Jim,' he said, presently, 'we've got neighbours of some kind. I came across a track of some kind of a raw-hide foot-fixing—no heel. But it ain't Indians: sort o' too pointed at the toes for a moccasin.'

II.

After the remains of supper, a meal of which they usually partook about sundown, had been cleared away and the dishes washed up, the two men drew up round the open fire. This time was always devoted to the amusement of the Kid. She was now

upon her father's knee begging in sundry ways peculiar to children all the world over to be made a fuss with. Jim rode her on his foot; but that didn't seem to suit. Then he began to sing several snatches of rough doggerel songs, probably not originally intended for nursery use:

Oh ma'am, oh ma'am, just look at Kate—
She's wiping her nose with a buckwheat cake—

he began; but the Kid evidently wanted no more of that. Then he tried another:

Apple-sass
And sparrer-grass,
And the old——

but that wouldn't do.

Little brown dog he come a-trotten down the road,
And the wind——

A sharp tug at his beard stopped that. Then in a very high key he commenced:

We won't work on the railroad,
We won't work on the trail,
For we'll go down to Cheyenne town
And play——

But the child stopped him again.

'Tory! 'tory!' she exclaimed, tugging at his shirt-sleeve; 'Unco Dave! beaver 'tory.'

'She wants me to tell her about the little beaver that broke up Dan's housekeeping,' said Dave. 'Don't you, my pet? Come along then.' And he opened his arms as the child toddled across to him. On his lap she seemed just as comfortable as upon her father's, and in contemplation of hearing her favourite story she was happy.

'Well, once upon a time,' began Dave, with a peculiar intonation into which he lapsed only when 'yarning' to the Kid, 'there was——'

'What's that, Jim?' he broke off; 'seems to me I heard something "patter." Are the horses picketed all right?'

'Once upon a time, in Trap Country, in the Territory of Trapa——'

'There, Jim! I heard it again.' The dog too had pricked up his ears.

This time, at any rate, Dave was not mistaken; for as he was speaking the latch of the door went up with a click, and before

either of them had thought of doing anything, someone was in the room. The two men were spell-bound.

Attired as the figure was, there was no mistaking at a glance that their visitor was a woman—and one both young, pretty, and unconventional to boot. Looking from one to the other, she at last fixed her eyes on Dave and asked, with arched eyebrows and questioning eyes:

‘Are you a *man*?’

Had such an interrogation come from the lips of a man, it might have led to calamity. As it was, Dave looked surprised only. With a glance up and down the length of the intruder, in which no inflection of the graceful figure was left unprospected, he answered slowly:

‘Well, that’s what I’ve generally proposed to be.’

To his utter astonishment, the girl came forward and kissed him. He did not resent the freedom; but when she crossed over and performed the same kind office on *Jim*, saying, ‘And you’re one too,’ he thought that she was perhaps a little too munificent.

‘I never saw a man before,’ continued the artless girl, ‘except you. I’ve watched you for days and days, and when I told mother she was frightened and angry . . . and cried, and talked so funny, I couldn’t understand.’

‘Then you’ve got a mother?’ said Jim, as though he had rather thought somehow that she had dropped down upon them from the clouds. With more gallantry than the elder man, or perhaps only because he had had more time to regain his presence of mind, he had given up his seat to her and stood to one side, casting covert and curious glances at Dave, who still held the child (whose large wondering eyes surveyed the intruder) upon his knee.

‘Tory! tory!’ reminded the child.

Then, for the first time, the stranger seemed to notice it, and she gave a little cry—half delight, half astonishment. Noting the longing look, Dave good-naturedly placed the child upon her knee, and she covered it with kisses, saying:

‘I suppose I was like that once?’

The question was at once so innocent and so undissembling that it seemed to warrant no reply.

But when she added, ‘Won’t you give it to me, to keep—to play with?’ Jim only laughed and shook his head, and answered:

‘Not much!’

In perfect faith the little thing nestled in her lap, and, looking up into her face, called out again, 'Tory.'

'I was just commencing to tell the Kid a yarn,' explained Dave, 'when you stepped in'—he spoke almost as though they had expected the visit—'and I suppose if I don't go on with it there'll be a racket.'

'Won't you tell it to me too? I like stories. Mother tells me stories sometimes . . . when she can think; but sometimes she can't think: oh, she's so funny!' At this mention of a mother a shade seemed to fall, for the first time, upon the bright questioning face.

Dave drew himself forward and gazed into the fire. A strange little circle was this: the girl's expectant face; the child's complacent attitude; Dave's open, honest countenance; Jim's towering figure in the background—all these things the light of the fire played upon and intensified. And, strange to say, it leant to the little group also an air of long familiarity.

'Once upon a time,' began Dave, 'in Trap Country, in the Territory of Trapaho, there lived a trapper by the name of Dan. He wasn't a bad sort of man, although a mixture of French, Indian, and nigger (a pretty mean cross!). At first, when he used to go into Virgin City, the fellows called him by any name that came edgeways and uppermost. *He* appeared the *least* interested what he was called, as long as it was in time for meals; until one day Dutch Pede unfortunately hit upon the distinction of "Liar." Even then Dan didn't seem to mind much, but simply said, "Stranger, you mustn't call *me* a liar!"—and the funeral took place early in the afternoon.

'Dan was trapping up on the Little Horn about eighty miles from Virgin City. He was a poor man (it ain't often that the rich take up the business), possessed of merely the bare necessities of life. In his little cabin he had neither chairs nor table. Once he had had a pack of cards; but he had traded them off one day to another trapper who happened to pass by on his road from town with plenty of whisky. But Dan had one thing that no one could trade him out of (not even with whisky)—a tame beaver—'

'I had a little bear once,' volunteered the listening girl—it was evident that in intellect she was but a child—'but poor Davey—mother called it "Davi"—died.'

'Yes, it is hard to raise 'em, I expect,' said Jim, looking

admiringly down on the girl, 'but I never gave it a trial—and don't know as I want to.'

'He called it Jerry,' Dave went on, continuing the story. 'It was such a curious little thing, with a lovely soft curly coat and such a funny tail!—very broad and flat, and about as long as himself. This tail was the one thing about Jerry's general construction that he couldn't see the use of; instead of lying flat upon the ground, as he thought it ought, it would always set up edgeways. If there was a crack anywhere about, it was sure to fall through it and get firmly wedged. One day, while Dan was out, it *had* fallen through a crack in the floor, and Jerry had to cut out (with his teeth, of course) a large hole to release it. He would stop sometimes, expecting to see it trailing along after him, with disgust; and once he started in to cut it off, but it hurt!——'

At this the little child burst out into a fit of uncontrollable laughter.

'He always was very sleepy in the daytime, and would lie coiled up upon the bed; but at night nothing was frisky enough for him, and sometimes he would go off for an evening stroll.

'After a time Dan had got enough skins together to once more pay a visit to Virgin City. He of course took Jerry and carried him about all over town, where he (not Dan, you bet!) was much petted and admired by the ladies. Well, Dan made a good sale of his wares, and then he felt so rich that he determined to go in for some comfort at home, and accordingly invested in a few gallons of whisky, a pack of cards, and a complete outfit of rough furniture. Next morning of course he was "broke," and as he couldn't trade his purchases away again to any fair advantage for anything wet and palatable, was reluctantly obliged to get for home again. He could have raised the necessary on his beaver no doubt, but his answer was, "Dan ain't that kind of a man."'

'I won't sell my ickle beaver, will I, Unco Dave, when I get it?' put in the Kid gravely; by which it would seem that she had been promised one—by her father probably.

And then the girl said, 'I had a little catamount once, but a rock fell down on it.' Strange to say, much as she had appeared to enjoy the prospect of hearing this story told, she now seemed to be taking much more interest in the child upon her knee; and perhaps that unconsciously recalled incidents in the past—perhaps of her own childhood.

'Now Dan being an extremely plain man,' Dave went on, 'he was only vain about his personal appearance, as a general thing; but on the night of his arrival home, after taking his purchases into the cabin and placing a demijohn of whisky upon the table, he sat admiringly for some time, and then, taking the demijohn with him, retired for the night justly proud of himself and his cabin—for he was the first trapper ever known to leave Virgin City with more than the loss of an eye, ear, or part of a nose; many had been rendered perfectly incapable of leaving without assistance.

'Jerry could not at all understand what it all meant. He did not even see the use of a very comfortable, though plain, arm-chair that was Dan's especial pride; but what played most upon his feelings was that he had been entirely forgotten, and could find neither food nor water. He wandered disconsolately round the table, sniffing suspiciously at the legs, and at last concluded (beavers are mighty cunning) that Dan was on a bender. He walked to the head of the bed, smelt the demijohn, and doubted no longer. At last, right in one corner of the room, he found a pail of water (Dan was generally careful enough to keep the water-bucket up out of his reach). The pail was high and Jerry was fat, but with a run and a jump, and before that tail of his could spring him down again, he had hooked his forepaws up over the edge of the bucket. In another second Jerry was on his back in a pool of water, drenched to the skin. Here was a go! What was he to do?'

This position was hailed with a crow of delight by the Kid, who almost wriggled off the girl's lap.

'When Dan woke up next morning he had a dim recollection of strange grating sounds during the night. Perhaps there had been a storm. With this idea he took a drink and then looked out of the single pane of glass—the only source of light in the little sleeping-partition; but all outside was calm and still. The sun hadn't risen yet, and the shadow of the high and rocky cliffs to the east of the cabin mantled the valley. With a yawn he stepped out into the main, and in fact only, room of the cabin. What he saw But I'm getting along too fast, and must go back a little

'Looking on the pale sheet of water, strange recollections seem to have flashed upon Jerry, or perhaps it was only dormant instinct called into play by the first body of water he had seen since his

uncertain childhood. I don't know. Maybe he saw the sparkling mountain torrent dammed in the ingenious fashion of his tribe, and in that instant he saw clearly how to do it himself; or maybe it was only out of cussedness; there was plenty of material handy to make a dam, so he set to work to make one, with that amount of energy only given to the beaver and the bee.

'What Dan saw was the result of Jerry's hard night's work. There, in the middle of a pool of water, was a high pile; table and chairs all cut up into nice even lengths by Jerry's sharp teeth and worked in together most ingeniously. The poor innocent (?) little pet, exhausted, lay coiled up beside the wreck of Dan's first attempt at civilised life. From the quiet expression of the face it seemed that he was content, and quite proud of this, his first attempt to use that wonderful instinct that Providence had given him—his partner having so kindly *furnished* the material.

'Dan only gazed a moment on the scene. He was a very cool man of few words. He smiled (he wore a regular smile: people in Virgin City said "since his wife died") a kind o' home-sick smile as he reached down his rifle, saying slowly: "I believe I'll take a hand in this——"

'Jerry never heard the end of the sentence—he had heard Dan talk like that before; he was at that moment unexpectedly called away. With one jump he was down the hole that he had once cut out to release his tail, and running out from under the cabin, at the end where there was a space between the ground and the first log, made by instinct for the river. As he was getting there the fastest he knew how, there came the report of a rifle-shot, and his business appeared even more pressing than before.

'He ran, and he ran, till he came to a river. Then he took a hurried glance over his shoulder to see whether that tail of his had followed along all right. It had, so he curled the end of it round to his lips, blew a loud whistle (you didn't know that was how they made that funny noise before, did you, Kid?), and turned a back-somersault into the stream.'

The Kid laughed, jumped, and wriggled with delight.

'Jerry has learnt the important lesson,' concluded Dave, with the air of a person who imparts a moral, even though that moral be a dubious one, 'that nothing useless was ever created; and now he finds that tail of his, next to his teeth, the most useful of his kit of tools—and he is glad enough that it *did* hurt! But, like those who have travelled, he now tells other ignorant beavers

strange stories which are sometimes rather fine and large. The pretty Miss Beavers all make eyes at him, and he grows more conceited and fatter every day. How the little baby-beavers laugh and kick when he tells them of his first attempt at damming! And their little eyes twinkle and expand as he tells them that the timber used grew already stripped of bark and limbs, ready for use. And the naughty little things get together, while their parents are all out hard at work, and vow secretly to run away the next still moonlight night (because they are afraid of the dark) to seek adventure; adding, in their pretty little beaverish way, "and we'll dam the expense."

Almost before the Kid had time to cry 'More!' the strange, impulsive girl had turned up an injured face and volunteered the explanation of her lack of interest.

'Mother tells me *that* story,' she said.

Dave was astonished! He almost so far forgot himself in the presence of a woman as to exclaim, 'The deuce she does!' but he restrained himself.

'That's queer,' he said; 'devilish queer.'

And so it really was. It was an experience in his own early life; and years and years ago, when his eldest child was about another such a little 'chit' as Jim's, he had made it up into a little story to amuse him. Never since then had he told it until he knew the Kid. As he thought on these things he became perplexed . . . and sad. It *was* strange that this girl had heard it; and he could not get the thought out of his mind.

'What is your name?' asked Dave presently.

The girl shook her head; she didn't know that she had one.

'And your mother's?'

Mother was 'Mother' to her, she said, and she was 'my child' to her mother.

'Where do you live, then?' asked Jim, perplexed. "

'Away over,' replied the girl, 'away over,'—and she pointed in the direction in which the creek flowed to the Maple River, 'in the cave.'

Both men knew all the ravines in that direction, but they knew of no cave. In regard to the distance she could tell them nothing. She and her mother lived there alone, as they always had; she had never before seen any other human being, and she didn't think Mother had, although sometimes she would tell funny

stories about a world and people across the plains; but sometimes they were giants and sometimes dwarfs—Mother was so funny! She didn't know the meaning of a father, and was sure she never had one; but of all this the men could make nothing.

'Well,' said Dave, presently, 'will you stay here to-night? And then in the morning you can take me to the cave. But how about "Mother"?'

'She went away to-day. Sometimes she comes back, and sometimes she doesn't; she's so funny . . . Out in the great world are there any more men—and little babies like this one?' she asked.

'A sight too many,' was Jim's unromantic answer.

It was settled that she would stay, and on the morrow take Dave to where she and her mother lived. In fact it seemed that she would rather stay with them and the Kid altogether.

Now came the child's bath-time. A large iron pot full of water had been steaming away upon the fire all this time; Jim fetched the wooden tub, which was also used for washing far less sacred things, and made all ready.

If this strange girl had been fascinated by many strange things this evening (and the quiet dog had not surprised her a little), now her face was a picture to look upon. As Jim undressed the Kid her eyes shone, and her whole face—she who had never even had a doll—was lighted up with a joy seldom seen on human countenance. And when Jim let her take the child and bath it all by herself her delight knew no bounds. She, who had never seen a child before, tended it so well, as well as any mother could; and she who knew nothing of the wiles of womanhood had already stolen the hearts of the only two men that she had ever seen. She laughed a great deal; the Kid enjoyed it; she made herself in a great mess and very wet, and was unutterably happy.

But at last the operation was complete, and once more they were all sitting before the fire. The Kid was never put to bed awake; she was always held on either Jim's or 'Uncle Dave's' lap before the fire, after being bathed, until she fell asleep, and was then put to bed, so that she never quite knew how she got there. Now she was on the stranger's lap, and the girl begged to be allowed to tell her a story. Jim was not even jealous that the child looked so contented in another's arms.

'All right,' he said, in his rough but well-meaning way, 'she'll be asleep in about two minutes, but eat in.'

The girl waited for no other invitation.

'Once upon a time,' she began—perhaps in imitation of Dave's style, or perhaps it was as her mother had told her—'there lived a good man named DAVE DUNLOW——'

Jim looked up quickly, and Dave jumped from his seat, for she had called him by name. The girl, noticing the commotion that her words had caused, had paused: and it was Dave who said 'Go on.' The Kid was fast asleep.

'Dave Dunlow,' repeated the girl, adding as a sort of an apology, 'that's what Mother called him, but she's so funny, his wife and three children—one a baby only a month old.'

Dave leaned forward on his seat, prepared not to lose a word that fell from the girl's lips.

'They were poor folks living on the frontier, and had to make a living as best they could; and though it wasn't exactly right, they traded whisky to the Indians——'

The girl repeated the story simply, as a child might have done; she was quite ignorant even of the meaning of many of the words.

'All went well for some time, and the Dunlows were becoming rich in cattle and horses; then they saw that it would be easy for them to make a good living without having recourse to the illicit trade in whisky, and so gave it up, keeping only one two-and-a-half gallon keg for medicine, or in case of snake-bites, or other accidents.

'Although after this the Indians were continually bothering and offering absurd bargains for the spirit, if only Dave would obtain it for them, nothing could have seemed more friendly than they were. But somehow, unluckily it became known among them that there was "fire-liquor" stored away in the house, and probably they thought in considerable quantity.

'One night the family were suddenly aroused by yells and the dancing of many feet, without. Dave sprang out of bed and threw open the door, not waiting even to catch up his rifle, for he was a brave man. The night was dark. There was a struggle, a cry, a dull thud—and then a heavy body fell across the floor. Mrs. Dunlow was instantly seized, thrown down upon the bed and lashed tightly to it; but she still held the baby in her arms.

'Then they lighted a candle that stood by the bedside, and dragged Dave's body up to the side of his wife, upon the floor . . . and she could see that he was dead. Then they began to search

the house; they were about a dozen "braves" in all. They entered the little room in which the two eldest children slept, and the poor captive woman fainted away.

'When she came to herself again there was a great chattering and brawling; the whisky-keg, with its top knocked out, was standing upon the stove, and they were helping themselves from it with a tin cup—all evidently in the last stage of drunkenness. Hard as it was to make head or tail of what they were debating, she could catch enough to gather that in the morning they intended to leave her strapped down as she was and set fire to the house. After a long time one after another began to lie down and fall into a heavy sleep—the whisky had done its work.

'How long Mrs. Dunlow struggled she did not know, but at last she was free! She raised her husband's head; his lips were warm . . . but he was dead. Stepping over several prostrate forms she gained the light, and entered the elder children's sleeping-room; they were asleep indeed!

'She wrung her hands, and looked down upon the sleeping "braves." She had the baby left, and could perhaps have escaped; but her one thought was of revenge! If there had been but half the number she would kill them as they slept, with the axe. She cared not for her own life, but meant that none should escape. She could fire the house! But then perhaps some would save themselves. Perhaps it was the devil whispered in her ear the word "Poison!"

'*"Poison! Poison!"* The word burnt into her brain! She remembered that Dave always had poison for the wolves and skunks, and that he kept it out in the shed "on account of the youngsters." The blood was like fire in her veins; it set her head on fire, and she knew not what she did. Ah! she would mix it with the whisky and then give each a drink. She was mad . . . mad . . . mad!'

Dave had risen, and now paced up and down the room.

The girl had paused, and looking down at the child, exclaimed:

'Why, the nasty little thing's asleep!'

'And has been this long while,' said Jim; 'else I should have stopped ye.'

Dave Dunlow still paced to and fro before the fire, striving in vain to collect his scattered thoughts, and to regain his presence of mind.

Jim took the Kid and put her to bed ; and as the girl begged to sleep with the child, he gave up his own place to her. He fixed an old tarpaulin across from wall to wall ; the girl wished them good-night, passed behind this temporary partition, and then the two men were alone.

It was some time before Dave came and sat down by the fire beside his partner, and when he did Jim looked across at him with a glance of kind inquiry.

Dave understood.

‘I seem to have lost a thread or two, Jim,’ he said, nervously. ‘That “Dave” she told about was me, of course ; you’ve seen that much?’

Jim nodded assent.

‘Well, when I came to, that morning (I was ’most dead, *then*), there lay thirteen fine buck Indians, screwed up into all manner of shapes they were. And the two children were there—peaceful enough. But the wife and baby were gone.’

Dave broke down, and shading the side of his face nearest his partner, gazed into the fire. But Jim passed no remark, and presently he spoke again :

‘I might have hunted longer than I did, but then, you see, I was *sure* that she had been carried off. I didn’t, of course, think that those thirteen dead bucks cleaned out the bunch, and I couldn’t think what had killed ’em.’

By a great effort the strong man roused himself, and added :

‘I thought it was the whisky did it, Jim, honest ! Powerful mean whisky it was : only stood me in two and two bits the gallon.’

Both men sat for a long time without speaking. Then Dave got up, and walking to the end of the room pushed aside the tarpaulin.

He watched the breath of the two sleeping figures come and go. The child was not much like, certainly ; neither was the girl, in *features*. But her calm, trustful attitude ; the heaving breast ; the parted lips ; the position of the loving arm about the Kid ; all these had their expression : and he had looked upon this scene before—and loved it, long, long ago.

He bent down and kissed her forehead.

And what he whispered no man heard ; and even had it been so, should not here be recorded.

III.

Soon after daybreak Dave and his girl-guide started off down the creek. The sun as yet was not sufficiently high up to shine in upon the valley; a deep irregular line lay along the cliffs on either side, dividing the sunlight from the shadow, and the valley through which they passed lay chill within the shade. A thin mist rose from the awakening ground. Two magpies, startled from an overhanging cedar, passed high overhead, and in making towards a jagged point on the opposite cliff with irregular and laboured flight, were now in the shadow, now in the sunlight, which intensified their metallic lustre and glanced again as upon a looking-glass.

A belated beaver hearing the approach of unwonted footsteps slid almost noiselessly into the stream, and rising again with a slight blowing sound some distance farther down, in a calm back-eddy, lay motionless and low upon the water, as though intent upon finding out what strange thing had come to pass; but as the footsteps again came nearer, he sank himself, full-length, beneath the surface: and only the accustomed eye could have told, by the faint ripple which seemed to linger at the spot, that he was still there, and would soon rise again in the same place.

But the eye of Dave Dunlow, usually so quick, had noted neither the one nor the other; the keen hunter's ear, long trained to catch and to distinguish the slightest sound, was dull this morning. His senses were away in a dim recollection, where his brain was busy striving, bead by bead, to thread the past. With eyes turned inward, he saw the recollection of the interior of a little cabin: a pretty woman, rather below the middle stature, in the full glow of youth and health, was vigorously rubbing clothes upon a wash-board: he saw two little children there too, but he could not conjure up what they were doing: and a tiny infant in a cradle. His ears, that listened to no outward sound, caught only the faint intonation of what seemed to him the softest and the sweetest voice . . . and the words were always: 'Dave! Dave!'

The strong hand in which he held his rifle trembled, as the hand that holds a rifle should not tremble.

He was awakened from his reverie by the girl, who was now a few paces in advance, calling to him gleefully:

'This is where I saw you! I was over there,' pointing across the creek—'behind that——'

'Come back!' exclaimed Dave, in a tone of authority; 'a little lower down is where I set the bear-trap. I had 'most forgot. Come back.' And taking the girl's hand in his they advanced upon the spot together.

As they drew near, he exclaimed again:

'It's struck!—I thought I'd set it pretty well.' In a second the whole hunter's interest and excitement had come back to the man.

'This way,' he continued 'Don't look much like a bear's scuffling, do it?—not a very big one any way Here's the log-trail: come on.' A clear track where something heavy had been dragged along was visible, and Dave followed fast but cautiously upon it. 'That's a bear-track!' he exclaimed presently; 'and a big one too, ain't it? Don't follow along too close now—that's it Stand back!'

The girl needed not the command, for as he spoke she had heard a low deep growl, and had shrunk back to the verge of the stream. She saw Dave Dunlow raise the rifle to his shoulder, and fire. Then there was the sound of a heavy body breaking through the briars towards her; and she fled.

The bear had stood facing Dave, with its head down, when he shot, and he had aimed a little too high and had broken its back, or rather its spine, about at the juncture of the hind-legs. Its hind part dragging on the ground, it came towards him, mouth open; he did not trouble to reload in a hurry, waiting for the bear to be suddenly brought to a stand-still by the log of the trap—it had not occurred to him that he had heard no chain rattle; so the bear was close upon him before he realised that it was *free*. However, luckily for Dave, it was so far crippled that he could easily keep out of its way, and reloading quickly, he let the bear drag itself to within a few paces of him before he fired again: this time he shot it through the head, and merely jerking its head up, without either cry or groan it was dead.

Now, it struck Dave for the first time that he had heard no chain rattle, and that therefore the bear had already broken loose before he came upon the scene: but then the strange thing was that, being free, it had not made off at their approach. But when he came to examine the carcass, there were no marks of a trap upon any of the legs—the bear had not been caught at all!

Why then had it stayed to show fight?

This question Dave answered to himself as any other hunter would have answered it: the bear was feeding.

By this time the terrified girl had returned. This was the first bear that she had ever seen *dead*: and as she smoothed down its fur no doubt her mind was agitated by much the same thoughts that agitate far tamer girls. But strange to say, she had no thought of a cape, but of how a pair of breeches built of such material might become her, for winter wear, better than her buckskins.

'That bear must have been at something up there,' said Dave, turning to her, and pointing up under the cliff, where the bear had stood; 'he was on the feed; and that's about the only time they wouldn't run—before they're meddled with. Or likely it's another up there in the trap. But if it is she's dead—or mighty silent. You stay here—the thing won't bite ye!—and I'll investigate.'

Thus assured, the girl waited, while Dave Dunlow followed back the line in which the bear had come. He was some time gone; and as the dead bear offered at once the most convenient and the softest resting-place, she sat down astride the carcass, and amused herself by stroking down its neck and trying to make its little ears stand out. Sitting thus, in her romantic dress, and framed by such romantic surroundings, it was at once a pretty and a wild picture, indeed!

She waited on. So long it seemed—she didn't know how long! Then she fell into a day-dream:—What a fine strong, brave man Dave was; fancy not running away from a bear! She loved Dave—and Jim too, a little bit; but perhaps Jim would have run away. And the Kid—yes, that was the funniest, and the best, of all! Then she tried to imagine what the great world, and what other people, would be like. Hadn't they promised to take her, and Mother too, to see it? The time passed slowly by. Perhaps after all there *was* no other world, and they had only deceived her? If they had she would steal the Kid and run away. Perhaps even now Dave had gone off and left her. At the thought she clenched her little fists and shouted:

'Dave! Dave!'

Only the rocks above answered, 'Dave!! Dave! Dave.'

Again she called; and only the echoes came, and died away.

Then she threw her head down upon the bear's breast and sobbed. She seemed to go to sleep, and waking again directly

would have thought that all was but a passing dream. But Dave himself, in the flesh, stood over her.

‘What is it, my child?’ he asked—‘you called me.’

There was something in his tone, so low, so kind, that she at once repented having doubted him.

‘I thought you had gone away and left me,’ she said, simply.

‘No,’ replied Dave quietly; ‘I was here close by all the time.’

She noticed that his whole manner was changed, and softened. His eyes glistened; and she fancied somehow that he too had been crying: but that was impossible—her Dave wouldn’t cry for anything; he was too brave!

She rose up, threw her arms about his neck, and kissed him: instinctively she seemed to know that he stood in need of comfort—and what greater comfort than to be encircled by soft loving arms! He kissed her in return; and a feeling came over her that she had never experienced before—so strange, that she released her arms quickly and sat down again on the bear.

Dave sat down beside her, and placed his arm about her waist:

‘My child,’ he whispered in a broken voice, ‘Heaven has sent you to me, maybe. Will you go out with me, and Jim, and the Kid, into the great world?’

And she, clinging to him, answered vehemently:

‘Won’t I!’

Again all manner of strange visions began to pass, some right side up, others upside down, before her eyes. But Dave spoke again:

‘Well, then, you run back to the shanty and look after the Kid, and send Jim to me. Tell him to bring an axe and a spade, and we will start to-night.’ He passed a hand quickly across his face, and any other girl but this one would have known that this rough, strong man had brushed away a tear.

So soon as she was gone away to do his bidding Dave commenced to skin the bear; and as he plied the knife a single band of gold glistened on his little finger; it had not been there an hour ago. Barely had he finished the work when Jim came, axe in hand, and spade upon his shoulder.

‘Hello,’ he said, ‘what’s up now, then?’

Dave did not answer the question, but said, ‘Follow me, Jim,’ and from his tone his partner saw clearly that something *was* ‘up’; ‘you can leave the spade here.’

Jim put down the spade, and together they went towards the bluff. They were gone some time, and there were several sharp ringing echoes as of metal struck by metal; but when they reappeared they bore between them the body of a woman, and a broken bear-trap.

They wrapped the body in the bearskin, and then by turns began to dig beside it. Neither spoke, until Jim, who was digging, up to his waist in a narrow trench, leant upon his spade.

'I expect, Dave,' he said, in his practical way, 'she missed the gal last night, and was roamin' about huntin' for her, and happened to run against the bear-trap. That was about the size of it.'

And Dave answered: 'Likely, Jim . . . likely.'

That night the stars that look down for ever on the silent mountains blinked and looked again; and the moon, low in the heavens, turning a steady gaze to the west, saw first three laden pack-horses come up out of the darkness on to the 'divide'; then another horse with its rider; still another followed on, and this one bore a double burden; then presently, bringing up the rear, came yet one more horse and rider.

Silently they traversed the ridge, but when the foremost horseman commenced to descend the steep and ledgy eastern slope he dismounted, and starting the horse on alone, returned and took the bridle of the one following, to lead it.

'How's the Kid, child?' he asked.

'Fast asleep, Dave.' As the girl spoke she noticed, for the first time, the ring upon the hand that held her bridle, and the thought of her mother, the only person she had ever seen wear one, flashed upon her mind; so full had she been of the new world that she was now about to see.

'Where's Mother?' she demanded. 'You said that you would take her too, and——'

She could not see Dave's face, but he interrupted her.

'She's all right, my child . . . *She's gone on ahead.*'

She trusted and believed him, but yet did not understand. Just then Jim came up close behind them, and they turned their backs upon the 'divide,' upon the mountains, and upon the West for ever.

RIDDLES.

A RIDDLE is a general term for any puzzling question. Asking riddles has been from time immemorial a favourite source of social entertainment, and more especially so in the ages before the spread of literary tastes and habits. Every language has probably a word of its own domestic growth for this kind of inquiry, just as 'riddle' is a pure and native English word. But for the varieties of riddling questions, we do not find that languages have generally provided themselves with any corresponding variety of expression. The terms *enigma*, *rebus*, *charade*, *conundrum*, are words of Greek and Latin derivation, and these have become the common property of all literary languages; and there is another term, '*logograph*,' which is used by Ben Jonson, a word made by the French from Greek materials, and signifying word-fishing.

The early riddle exhibits in its composition some of the chief elements of literature. Prominent among these is the anthropomorphic or personalising tendency of early thought, which makes the riddle appear (in one of its aspects) as akin to the fable. This is well seen in the riddle or apologue of Jotham: 'The trees went to anoint a king over them, and they said unto the Olive tree: Be thou our king! But the Olive tree answered them: Shall I go and leave my fatness (which God and man honour in me) and go to be puft up above the trees? Then said the trees unto the Fig tree: Come thou and be king over us! But the Fig tree said unto them: Shall I leave my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to be puft up above the trees? Then said the trees unto the Vine: Come thou and be our king! But the Vine said unto them: Shall I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be puft up above the trees? Then said all the trees unto the Thorn bush: Come thou and be king over us! And the Thorn bush said unto the trees: If it be true that ye anoint me to be king over you, then come and put your trust under my shadow; and else let fire go out of the Thorn bush and consume the Cedars of Lebanon.'

At the bottom of this is a perception of analogies in nature; the fruitful source not only of fable, but also of such contiguous

varieties as allegory, parable, and poetical similitude. If the analogies perceptible in nature, both animate and inanimate, produced fables, and those riddles that savour of the fable; so also did the same analogies which had been unconsciously reflected and stored up in metaphorical speech afford material for making cunning descriptions of things which should be scrupulously true and yet very hard to divine.

The best established form of riddle is probably the oldest; it is that which we still regard as the most legitimate and the most dignified kind, namely, the enigma. An enigma has been defined as a description which is perfectly true, but couched in metaphorical and recondite language which makes it hard to divine the subject. The following is a true enigma, though a homely example: 'Long legs, crooked thighs, little head, and no eyes.'

For a good enigma we must have a perfectly true description of a thing: every term used must be as scrupulously appropriate as in a logical definition; but it must be so ingeniously phrased and worded that the sense is not obvious, and the interpreter is baffled. There is vast room for the development of skill in this art, to make an enigma such that it shall be not merely obscure, but at the same time stimulating to the curiosity. A further step is to give it the charm of poetic beauty. This is quite germane to the nature of the enigma, which has a natural affinity with the epigrammatic form of poetry.

Samson's riddle was an enigma; so was that of the Sphinx. The two chief elements in the pristine enigma were metaphor and an appearance of incongruity, sometimes amounting to contradiction. The famous riddle of the Sphinx, which was solved by Œdipus, is entirely rooted in metaphor. 'What is that animal which in the morning goes on four feet, at noon goes on two, and in the evening goes on three feet?' Answer: Man. Here morning, noon, and evening are metaphors of infancy, manhood, and age; also, there is a metaphorical use of the word 'feet,' which is applied in one place to hands used for support, and in another place to a staff used as if it were a third foot. The puzzle in Samson's riddle is the result of incongruity joined with abstract terms:

Out of the eater came forth meat,
And out of the strong came forth sweetness.

In the following ancient Greek riddle there is something of both, but it rests chiefly on metaphor. 'A father had twelve

children, and each child had thirty sons and daughters, the sons being white and the daughters black, and one of these died every day, and yet became immortal.'

Planudes, a Greek monk at Constantinople in the fourteenth century, tells wonderful tales in his 'Life of Æsop' about the war of riddles that passed between Lycærus, king of Babylon, and Nectanebo, king of Egypt. The king of Babylon was always winner, because he had Æsop at his court, who was more than a match for the wit of the adversary.

Once, Nectanebo thought he was sure to puzzle the Babylonian, and his question was as follows: 'There is a grand temple which rests upon a single column, which column is encircled by twelve cities; every city has against its walls thirty flying buttresses, and each buttress has two women, one white and one black, that go round about it in turns. Say what that temple is called.' Æsop was equal to the occasion, and he explained it thus: The temple is the world, the column is the year, the twelve cities are the months, the thirty buttresses are the days, the two women are light and darkness.

An enigma of a homely nature, and which is probably of high antiquity, to judge not only by what tradition tells about it, but also by the fact that it is still found in some of the detached and less central parts of Europe, is this: 'What we caught we threw away, what we could not catch we kept.' There is an apocryphal legend that Homer died of vexation because he could not solve this riddle.

Here is a modern setting of the same idea. 'He loves her; she has a repugnance to him, and yet she tries to catch him; and if she succeeds, she will be the death of him.'

There have been epochs at which riddle-making has been more especially in vogue, and such epochs would appear to occur at seasons of fresh intellectual awakening. Such an epoch there was at the first glimmering of new intellectual light in the second half of the seventh century. This was the age of Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne, the first in the roll of Anglo-Latin poets. He left a considerable number of enigmas in Latin hexameters, and they have been repeatedly printed. Aldhelm died in 709. Before his time there was a collection of Latin riddles that bore the name of Symposius. Of this work the date is unknown; we only know that Aldhelm used it, and we may infer that it was then a recent product. The riddles of Symposius were uniform in shape,

consisting each of three hexameter lines. The subject of the sixteenth in that collection is the book-moth :—

Litera me pavit, nec quid sit litera novi ;
In libris vixi, nec sum studiosior inde ;
Exedi Musas, nec adhuc tamen ipse profeci.

Translation: *I have fed upon literature, yet know not a letter ; I have lived among books, and I am none the more studious for it ; I have devoured the Muses, yet up to the present time I have made no progress.*

Here is one of Aldhelm's upon the Alphabet :—

Nos denæ et septem genitæ sine voce sorores,
Sex alias nothas non dicimus adnumerandas,
Nascimur ex ferro rursus ferro moribundæ,
Necnon et volucris pennâ volitantis ad æthram ;
Terni nos fratres incertâ matre crearunt ;
Qui cupit instanter sitiens audire, docemus,
Tum cito prompta damus roganti verba silenter.

Translation: *We are seventeen sisters voiceless born ; six others, half-sisters, we exclude from our set ; children of iron, by iron we die, but children too of the bird's wing that flies so high ; three brethren our sires, be our mother as may ; if anyone is very eager to hear, we tell him, and quickly give answer without any sound.*

That is to say, seventeen consonants and six vowels ; made with iron stile and erased with the same, or else made with a bird's quill ; whatever the instrument, three fingers are the agents ; and we can convey answer without delay even in situations where it would be inconvenient to speak.

A younger contemporary of Aldhelm's was Tatwine, who was educated at St. Augustine's in Canterbury, and who for the last three years of his life (731-734) was Archbishop of Canterbury. He also left riddles in Latin, but they still remain in manuscript among the curiosities and treasures of the Cotton Library, except a few that have been selected for print as specimens. Dean Hook gave three in his 'Archbishops of Canterbury,' and of these three we will select one :—

Angelicas populis epulas dispono frequenter,
Grandisonis aures verbis cava guttura complent,
Succedit vox sed mihi nulla aut lingua loquendi,
Et bino alarum fulci gestamine cernor,
Queis sed abest penitus virtus jam tota volandi,
Dum solus subter constat mihi pes sine passu.

of which the translation, nearly verbal, is as follows:—

Angelic food to folk I oft dispense,
While sounds majestic fill attentive ears,
Yet neither voice have I nor tongue for speech.
In brave equipment of two wings I shine,
But wings withouten any skill to fly:
One foot I have to stand, but not a foot to go.

The answer is, in Latin, 'Recitabulum'; in English, 'An eagle-lectern.'

The riddling propensities of the seventh and eighth centuries propagated themselves throughout the remainder of the Anglo-Saxon period, and we have a collection of rather more than eighty riddles in English of the period before the Norman Conquest. These are mostly of the enigma type, and nearly all of them are in a poetical form.

The seventeenth century was a great era of riddle-making in France, and there are some considerable publications in French during that century, especially by Abbé Cotin, who is distinguished from the general company of riddle-makers by the fact that he owned the authorship of his enigmas, and, unless he has been maligned, did not spurn the credit of some that were not his. Generally the riddles of this period are without any author's name. The taste spread to England, and Jonathan Swift made some enigmas. Here are two of them:—

I with borrowed silver shine,
What you see is none of mine.
First I show you but a quarter,
Like the bow that guards the Tartar;
Then the half, and then the whole,
Ever dancing round the pole;
And true it is, I chiefly owe
My beauty to the shades below.

Answer: The Moon.

I'm up and down and round about,
Yet all the world can't find me out;
Though hundreds have employed their leisure,
They never yet could find my measure.
I'm found in almost every garden,
Nay, in the compass of a farden.
There's neither chariot, coach, nor mill
Can move one inch except I will.

Answer: A Circle.

These are so easy and transparent that their problematical element falls into the shade, and we are not puzzled at all; but

we are moved to admire very ingenious descriptions in graceful versification. This is the attribute of the epigram, and if the subjects of these were put at the head instead of at the foot, they would pass excellently well in a collection of epigrams.

The same may be said of the following, which is by the poet Cowper, and which calls for no unriddling:—

I am just two and two, I am warm, I am cold,
And the parent of numbers that cannot be told:
I am lawful, unlawful—a duty, a fault,
I am often sold dear, good for nothing when bought,
An extraordinary boon, and a matter of course,
And yielded with pleasure when taken by force.

Very different is the following about a bed, which is by C. J. Fox. It exhibits the principle of contradiction and paradox, and is good as an *enigma* and as an *epigram* also:—

Formed long ago, yet made to-day,
And most employed when others sleep;
What few would wish to give away,
And none would wish to keep.

I will add two of the paradoxical sort in plain prose:—‘I went to the Crimea, and I stopped there, and I never went there, and I came back again.’ Answer: ‘A watch.’ ‘I went to the wood and I got it, and when I had got it I looked for it, and as I could not find it I brought it home in my hand.’ Answer: ‘A prickle.’

The *enigma* is as capable as the *epigram* of being made into a beautiful little poem. There are good examples in German by Schiller, and in English by Praed. The following is one of Praed’s, which, not being by any means insoluble, is left to the divination of the reader:

In other days, when hope was bright,
Ye spake to me of love and light,
Of endless Spring and cloudless weather,
And hearts that doted linked together!

But now ye tell another tale:
That life is brief, and beauty frail,
That joy is dead, and fondness blighted,
And hearts that doted disunited.

Away! Ye grieve and ye rejoice
In one unfelt, unfeeling voice;
And ye, like every friend below,
Are hollow in your joy and woe!

After the *enigma* we must consider the *rebus*. This term is

simply the ablative plural of the Latin *res*, and signifies 'by things,' and its first application was to the putting of pictures for words or syllables. This first kind of rebus was known to the ancients, as may be seen in a paper by Addison in 'The Spectator,' No. 59. In rebuses alphabetic writing and picture-writing are often combined, as in an example quoted by Addison in the same paper, and as in the following from Fuller, which I quote after Webster:—

'He [John Moreton] had a fair library rebused with More in text and a Tun under it.'

When the Scythians were invaded by Cyrus, they sent him a messenger bearing arrows and a rat and a frog, which was a way of saying by lesson-objects that unless he could hide in a hole of the earth like a rat, or in water like a frog, he would not escape their arrows.

In its secondary sense the rebus is a sort of riddle in which the subject, or rather its name, is indicated by reference to objects either of experience or of history. Here follows a rebus by Vanessa (Miss Vanomrigh) on the name 'Jonathan Swift,' in which indications are given to guide the inquirer to the first syllable of Jo-seph, and then to the name of the prophet Nathan, and thirdly to the adjective 'swift':—

Cut the name of the man who his mistress denied,
And let the first of it be only applied
To join with the prophet who David did chide;
Then say what a horse is that runs very fast,
And that which deserves to be first put the last;
Spell all then, and put them together, to find
The name and the virtues of him I designed.
Like the patriarch in Egypt, he's versed in the state;
Like the prophet in Jewry, he's free with the great;
Like a racer he flies, to succour with speed,
When his friends want his aid or desert is in need.

The next form of riddle is the charade, which has a character that contrasts with the enigma; for while the enigma has its roots in the first primeval efforts of poetry and rhetoric, the charade is a product of the age of literary education, and it savours of the three R's. The subject is no longer a work of nature, but some element of grammar. The charade turns upon the letters or syllables composing a word; less often, but sometimes, on the words composing a phrase. The charade on the cod (to be quoted presently) turns on the three letters C, O, D.

There is a weekly contemporary which not only furnishes its readers with a periodical supply of charades, but also offers them substantial prizes for the solution. The following is a specimen of its craft in riddling, and for the solution we must refer our readers to the oracle itself, namely, 'The Magazine of Short Stories,' No. 130.

My First is made by City men—how very reprehensible !
 Self-interest is the only plea that renders it defensible ;
 'Tis sometimes in the meadows seen—phenomenon botanical,
 Not caused by feet of little folk, but growth that's cryptogamical.
 My Second is remarkable, his character's so various,
 He may be good, or bad, or weak, or timid, temerarious ;
 The crowning glory of a tree—mechanical or musical,
 Or literary, legal—but undoubtedly political.
 My Whole—supposed to be the first—pre-eminence detestable—
 More often in the background lurks—that fact is incontestable :
 In insurrections, mutinies, and mischief he's conspicuous,
 Yet oftentimes, we know, contrives to make himself ridiculous.

There is a more elevated kind of charade, a cross between the charade and the enigma, which deals with grammatical elements like the charade, but describes with the seriousness of the enigma. Among charades of this secondary type we may group Canning's famous riddle on Cares :—

A noun there is of plural number,
 Foe to peace and tranquil slumber ;
 Now any other noun you take,
 By adding *s* you plural make,
 But if you add an *s* to this
 Strange is the metamorphosis :
 Plural is plural now no more,
 And sweet what bitter was before.

And even a punning one like the following: 'What is that which sweetens the cup of life, but which, if it loses one letter, embitters it?' Answer:—Hope and Hop.

The most eminent example of this species (or sub-species) is the beautiful riddle on the letter H, which was long attributed to Lord Byron, but is now known to have been written by Miss Catherine Fanshawe:—

'Twas whispered in heaven, 'twas mutter'd in hell,
 And echo caught faintly the sound as it fell ;
 On the confines of earth 'twas permitted to rest,
 And the depths of the ocean its presence confest ;
 'Twill be found in the sphere when 'tis riven asunder,
 Be seen in the lightning and heard in the thunder.

'Twas allotted to man with his earliest breath,
 It assists at his birth and attends him in death,
 Presides o'er his happiness, honour, and health,
 Is the prop of his house and the end of his wealth ;
 In the heaps of the miser is hoarded with care,
 But is sure to be lost in his prodigal heir.
 It begins every hope, every wish it must bound,
 It prays with the hermit, with monarchs is crowned ;
 Without it the soldier, the sailor may roam,
 But woe to the wretch who dispels it from home.
 In the whisper of conscience 'tis sure to be found,
 Nor e'er in the whirlwind of passion is drown'd ;
 'Twill soften the heart, but, though deaf to the ear,
 It will make it acutely and instantly hear ;
 But in short, let it rest like a delicate flower,
 Oh ! breathe on it softly, it dies in an hour.

With these must be classed the charade on the Cod, wrongly attributed to Macaulay, of which mention has been made above.

Cut off my head, and singular I act,
 Cut off my tail, and plural I appear ;
 Cut off my head and tail, and, wondrous fact,
 Although my middle's left, there's nothing there.
 What is my head ? A sounding sea ;
 What is my tail ? A flowing river ;
 'Mid ocean's depths I fearless stray,
 Parent of softest sounds, yet mute for ever.

Here follows a charade which is fitted to serve for transition to the next species of riddle :—

My first denotes company ;
 My second shuns company ;
 My third summons company ;
 My whole amuses company.

The conundrum is the sort of riddle which is at present most in favour with young wits. It is a verbal puzzle, and the answer turns upon a pun, and, as Charles Lamb has said of puns in general, its excellence is in proportion to its absurdity.

A prevalent form of the conundrum is that which demands a resemblance or dissimilarity between two things that are incapable of comparison ; the answer must therefore be based upon a play of words. But the conundrum is very miscellaneous.

Thus : 1. 'Why is a naughty boy like a postage stamp ?'
 Answer : 'Because you lick him and stick him in a corner.' This provoked a counterpart.

2. 'What is the difference between a naughty boy and a postage stamp ?' Answer : 'The one you lick with a stick and the other you stick with a lick.'

3. 'How do you know that birds in their little nests agree?'
Answer: 'Because else they would fall out.'

4. 'Who gains most at a coronation, the king or his people?'
Answer: 'The king gains a crown, the people a sovereign.'

5. 'What is the difference between a lady and her mirror?'
Answer: 'One speaks without reflecting, the other reflects without speaking.'

6. 'When is it right to take any one in?' Answer: 'When it rains.'

7. 'Why is the figure nine like a peacock?' Answer: 'Because it is nothing without its tail.'

The origin of the name conundrum is obscure, but it seems to have been a slang word of the bogus Latin sort; and Skeat thinks that it may have been suggested by the Latin gerund *conandum*, to try.

This comprehensive term covers a variety of absurd questions and answers. There is a funny old book, printed in 1511, by Wynkyn de Worde, with the title, 'Demands Joyous,' that is to say, Merry Questions. Many of them are not calculated to be found out. Thus: 'What is that which never was and never will be?' Answer: 'A mouse's nest in a cat's ear.'

As the riddle usually turns upon metaphorical expression, and every kind of rhetorical figure, we naturally come to it with minds prepared to thread the labyrinth of verbal intricacies and subtle analogies. And out of this rises a new opportunity for the cunning questioner.

A secondary type of riddle is generated by taking advantage of the general impression, that the terms of the question will be ingenious and recondite and far-fetched. If every term of the question is plain, literal, and used in the properest sense, the guesser will be thrown off the scent, and will be hunting far afield while the game crouches at his door. Of this artless kind of artifice there are examples both enigmatic and charadish; here is one of the enigma type, which has before now mystified a whole circle of attentive riddle-lovers:—

Made in London, sold in York,
Put in a bottle, and called a cork.

The next is of the charade type, and it has a peculiar interest for me, because a friend of mine, with whom I discoursed of riddles, propounded it to me, with a little bit of his own personal

experience which took my fancy. This riddle (he said) was long ago proposed to him by a friend who could say the riddle but did not know the answer, and perhaps this condition made it take the deeper root in my friend's unsatisfied mind; and some years afterwards he recalled it to mind, and at the same time the answer flashed across him. The riddle is as follows:—

In my first my second sate;
My third and fourth I ate.

The result is often so different from what is expected, that although it may be true, and even very true, yet it produces the effect of a sheer 'sell.' 'Maria said to John, My father is your father, and my mother is your mother, and yet we are not brother and sister. What was Maria?' Answer: 'Ma-ri-a[r] was a liar.'

Among the literal sort are these: 'Why do ducks go under water?' Answer: 'For divers reasons.' This riddle was a novelty about the year 1845, and it soon provoked this counterpart, by no means equal in quality: 'Why do they come up again?' Answer: 'For sundry reasons.' 'Where is happiness always to be found?' Answer: 'In the dictionary.' 'What is that which is often found where it is not?' Answer: 'Fault.' 'What fish has its eyes nearest together?' Answer: 'The smallest.' 'When does a man sneeze thrice?' Answer: 'When he can't help it.' 'Which is the largest room in the world?' Answer: 'The room for improvement.'

It is not an accident that times of literary revival have been prolific in riddles. For it may be said generally that the powers of language which are exercised in riddle-making are the selfsame powers that are exercised in the art of literature, only that in making riddles those powers are drawn upon more continuously which in general literature are exercised with less intensity and effort. Metaphors, secondary meanings, adroit groupings which alter significations, all the powers that make words elastic, these are the faculties by which language is rendered plastic for the writer, and these are they that are brought into action by the riddle-maker with a more laboured accumulation of effects. With the progressive development of speech these powers increase, and there probably never was time or place in which the materials for riddles were so abundant as at the present time in the area that is covered by the English language.

THE FINCH FAMILY.

'WHAT are you in such a hurry to get your gun for?' I ask one of my friends, who fills the position of man-of-all-work in the place where I am staying for a time. His post, however, is rather a nominal one, for most of his time is spent in gardening.

I often have a chat with him, for I enjoy his quaint, original remarks, and although, as a rule, he is not expansive, when he does choose to talk he is always worth listening to. Besides this, he keeps his garden in excellent trim, and if there is one crop in it on which the old boy prides himself more than another, it is his peas. 'No one ken come up to 'em round about here,' he has told me more than once, with pardonable pride.

'What do I want with the gun? Hawfinches; they hawfinches in my peas!' he grunts.

As he leaves the tool-house I quietly follow, and place myself with him behind a low faggot-stack which stands in a line with the peas.

'Jest hear 'em! ain't it cruel!' he whispers. 'I hope the whole roost of 'em may git in a lump so that I ken blow 'em to rags an' tatters. If you didn't know what it was you'd think some old cow was grindin' up them peas. Ain't they scrunchin' of 'em! All right now, I ken see you grindin' varmints! Now for it!' Bang!

Three birds fall—young ones in their first plumage, which has a strong likeness to that of a greenfinch.

After picking the birds up we examine the pea-rows. There is no doubt as to the mischief the birds have done. The old fellow's own expression, 'grinding up,' is the best to convey any idea of the destruction that has taken place. Where the birds have been, nothing remains but the stringy portion of the pods of his precious 'Marrer fats.'

There is enormous power in the bill of the hawfinch, when the size of the bird is considered. The pea-pod is simply run through the bill, and the contents are squeezed out in the state of green pulp and swallowed.

'Varmints I call 'em, an' nothin' else,' is the remark my old friend makes, as he goes towards the tool-house and takes from a

shelf a hen hawfinch and two young ones, the former probably the mother of some of the birds that are about, if not, indeed, of the whole brood, her plumage showing that she has been sitting.

'People wants me to git 'em full-feathered old birds for stuffin', but, bless ye, ye might as well try to ketch weasels asleep. A cock hawfinch is about one o' the most artful customers as I knows on. The only time to git a clip at 'em is in winter under the plum and damson trees. They gits there after the stones, any amount o' stones lays jest under the ground, an' they picks 'em out an' cracks them easy. I gits plenty o' young ones when peas are about—the old ones lets 'em come, but they take precious good care they don't come off the tops o' the tree themselves afore they knows there ain't anybody about. Some says they're scarce birds. I knows they ain't—leastways not when my peas are ready to gather.'

In those districts of Surrey where peas are grown hawfinches are a perfect plague, more especially if wood or copse lands are near.

The hawfinch once seen will be remembered. He is a stoutly built bird with a very large and powerful bill. A child friend remarked he had a very large nose. His appearance reminds one at times of a small parrot, and again, he looks exceedingly pedantic. The delicate tints of his plumage (light reddish-brown, dark brown, grey, black and white) are well blended. The wings when open are beautiful, some of the feathers being in the form of an ancient battle-axe, reflecting tints of blue and green.

Before field naturalists became so common, the hawfinch, or 'haw grosbeak,' was considered a rare bird in many localities. It is certainly a very shy and retiring one, watchful and quick in all its movements. For this reason it is seldom seen by those who search for it for ornithological purposes. It breeds freely round the neighbourhood of Dorking—a fact which is continually being proved by the great number of young birds that are found there in various states of nestling plumage; some with the wing and tail feathers fully grown, others only just able to fly from the tree and back again. Much patient watching and a quick shot are needed to secure a pair of old hawfinches in full breeding plumage, but they fetch a price quite sufficient to encourage the attempt.

Although numbers of young birds are shot and buried in almost every garden where peas are grown, not half a dozen pairs of the old birds come into the hands of the bird-preservers in the

course of the year. Their keen light-grey eyes glance in all directions, no matter where they may be. I have often watched them in the winter months before the mania arose for destroying the fine old trees that lined the sides of some of our highways. There, amongst the crab-trees, bullaces, pickets, wild plums, and sloes, I have perhaps chanced upon a pair of hawfinches in the course of a five-mile walk; but then you can only see one side of the hedge as you go along.

My pleasure in watching them at work on the stones of the plums, or the pips of crab-apples was brief: in spite of the care I took not to startle them, they would suddenly fling themselves on to the road, perhaps to pick up gravel, and then as quickly jerk themselves back to the hedge.

The hawfinch is the quickest and most suspicious member of the finch tribes to be found in Great Britain. In winter his large bill is a light pinkish-brown, while in summer it changes to slate-blue. His nest, compared with that of other birds related to him, is simple in construction; but as it is of the bird I am writing and not of his domestic arrangements, I will not venture upon a description of it.

The greenfinch, called sometimes green grosbeak, and more often green-linnet, is one of our common birds. His plumage shows shades of green, yellow, and grey, with a touch of black. Of a less retiring and suspicious nature than the hawfinch, he builds his nest in gardens or shrubberies. Such confidence is, however, often misplaced, for if found by the gardener it is sure to be destroyed. Like the sailor, who is said to whistle for a breeze, the greenfinch calls for one, flying to the top of a tree at midday in the hottest summer, when other birds are dumb, and calling out at intervals in long-drawn notes, 'Breeze—breeze—breeze.'

'Oh, yes, you shall have a breeze,' says the gardener; 'I'll make one on purpose for you,' and he shoots him dead. Of the justice of this act the gardener must be allowed to be the best judge. He is probably bound in self-defence to protect his produce from the mischief wrought by birds of this sort. From my own experience, I may say that many of the most innocent-looking creatures are really the most destructive of the gardener's labour. When it is found that injury is done, and that in considerable quantity, the sentimental side of the question, to which our pity inclines, must give place to the practical.

The greenfinch is associated with my earliest childhood. On

the wild seacoast where we lived then he was a great favourite as a cage bird. Pets of that kind were much sought after at a time when books and amusements for the young were scarce, and any boy whose parents allowed him to keep a green-linnet was considered lucky indeed. The birds were carried about by the boys in their pockets when out of school. They were docile and affectionate creatures, and I remember well that amongst them was a tame sparrow which for intelligence and liveliness was not outdone by any of the others. Perhaps it is these early recollections that make me feel kindly disposed to the greenfinch whenever I see him or hear his well-known call for a breeze. If he is only wise enough to remain away from the garden, there are but few who will molest him. Fashion changes, and nowadays not many would keep the greenfinch as a cage bird. Setting on one side the fact that he, like others of his tribe, occasionally falls a victim to the sparrow-hawk or the kestrel, he has, I think, less to complain of than any of the finches.

A description of the bullfinch is hardly needed, so well is this beautiful bird with its brilliant scarlet breast known to dwellers both in country and town. The black, red, grey and white tints of his plumage, peculiarly pure and bright in his wild state, make him conspicuous as he flits about from one side of the hedge to the other, his soft and slightly mournful pipe betraying his presence in the distance. Beautiful as the strains from some wood fairy's flute might be is the soft sweet little song, all his own, with which the bullfinch cheers his mate as she sits on her nest. At such times he shows to the greatest advantage, with the jet-black feathers of his head raised, his breast puffed out, and his white tail displayed to perfection.

In a captive state the bullfinch is affectionate and intelligent, well repaying care and attention. The timidity natural to him in his wild state vanishes when once he has gained one's confidence. He will follow anyone about the house, up or down, and will go into his cage of his own accord, when he has had his range about.

One fine fellow I presented to my wife would sit on her shoulder and sing all breakfast time. When I held out my hand to take a cup of coffee, he would fly off her shoulder, scuttle over the table, and, getting in front of me, would scold his very loudest, as much as to say, 'How dare you bring your hand near my mistress!' This little performance over, he would fly back to her shoulder and sing his song, as if to assure her such behaviour

would not be repeated. In keeping the bullfinch as a pet it is well to keep no other creature in the same room, for his sensitive, affectionate nature can bear no rival. He gives you his whole affection, and his distress if he sees you talking to another pet is painful to see. In cases where his rival has been persistently noticed he has been known to pine and die.

If the bullfinch would but confine himself to the woods, fields, and hedgerows, where, except for hawks and bird-catchers, he is safe, all would be well with him; but his favourite place of resort is the garden, and that just at a time when the fruit-trees are beginning to bud.

It is nonsense to assert, as some have done in works on birds, that the buds of which bullfinches and other birds make such havoc have insects in them. It is romancing; garden trees, fruit-trees especially, are tended with the greatest care. No insects are allowed to gather on any of the leaves, either outside or in. The care taken with them is carried to such an extent that I have known men employed in conservatories for weeks in sponging each individual orange and lemon leaf.

The outside trees, especially the plum and cherry, receive the same care, though in a different way. These are the trees to which the bullfinch pays his most unwelcome attentions. Not satisfied with the buds of the wild cherry and the plum to be found in the hedgerows, he deliberately seeks those of the cultivated fruit, and in that way is a terrible hindrance to the gardener.

As a lover of birds from childhood, and now, at an advanced age, credited by some of my friends with having a severe attack of 'birds on the brain,' I would gladly exonerate my favourites from all blame. But the conclusion at which I have arrived, and which experience tells me is the true one, is, that some members of the finch tribe do a great amount of mischief in a garden. The bullfinch, in spite of his ruddy breast and his dainty flute-like song, is one of the gardener's special enemies. He gets shot down without mercy, and is left to rot beneath the trees which he has plundered of their buds.

The largest and rarest of the finch tribe is the pine bullfinch—a bird rare even in the pine-woods of Scotland, where it is supposed to breed, though about this I am not prepared to give an opinion. In plumage it rather resembles the crossbill. Being a Northern bird, it is probably migratory. All our common birds are more or less so, according to weather-changes. Vast numbers

come to us from the Continent, and return again if they escape the snares of the army of bird-catchers on the South Downs. The amount of small birds captured to supply the bird-markets is almost beyond belief. A bird-catcher with whom I had friendly relations for some time, and the accuracy of whose statements and observations I had no reason to doubt, gave me the number of dozens of birds caught and sold by him. He showed me his book where these numbers were duly entered, and side by side the receipts from them. I had much enjoyment in this man's society. Finding me to be a great lover of birds, but not a bird-catcher, he taught me all the secrets of his trade without reserve. These I keep religiously to myself. One day he told me of a strange bird he had picked up from the tangle on the beach. It was a turnstone—I recognised it at once from his accurate description, and my friend was as much surprised as pleased when I presented him with a portrait of the bird I had painted for him. That completely won his heart.

'Twink-twink, twing-twing, twink-twink ! spink-spink-spink !' and then a joyous little song. There sits the singer, the handsomest chaffinch of them all, or, as he is called in Germany, the 'noble finch.' It is unnecessary to describe the plumage of this bird, so common and so well known, the pet of the schoolboy and the favourite of the costermonger, who will have his 'bloomin' chawfinch.' Many are the singing-matches in which he takes part, and the time and order kept by the chaffinches when singing together might be imitated with advantage by many a musical assembly.

The chaffinch is *the* bird of the Dials ; and he really seems to enter into the spirit of the thing. No other bird used by the fowler calls so heartily in order to bring others within reach of net or limed twigs as the chaffinch.

He is a bird of high spirit, and, like a gamecock, answers a challenge directly. The green lanes and the elm-trees by the roadside are his resorts. I have seen him captured there many a time.

A man comes along the road with a small cage under his arm tied up in a handkerchief. In his hand he has a stuffed chaffinch in the attitude of challenging. Hearing the song of the chaffinch from the trees, he proceeds to fix his stuffed bird on a sloping portion of the trunk of one of the elms. A couple of feet or so below this he places some bird-limed twigs of whalebone, on the ground close by his little cage. He then gives out a rattling challenge,

answered at once by the bird in the tree, whose quick eyes search in all directions for his supposed rival. He soon discovers the singer, and his excitement at any other bird having the impudence to come and sing near his perch is extreme. Once more the challenge rings out; he can bear it no longer. Down he dashes, strikes the stuffed bird, causing it to sway up and down with the force of his stroke; and, falling on the limed twigs below, finds himself at the foot of the tree, a helpless captive.

I have known country lanes, before the Bird Protection Act came into force, cleared of chaffinches, to the great disgust and anger of the country people. Though obliged for the protection of their crops to shoot them at times, they are far from willing to see them captured in this wholesale way.

Real country folk are very tender in their dealings with the birds that live near them. In the course of my experience, extending over many years, I have never known a case of wanton cruelty occur in regard to wild birds. The labouring man, whose work so often lies far from the haunts of men, seeks companionship with the birds. Of these none is more friendly than the robin, who is sure to appear, however lonely the place.

Often in my own haunts, when watching for days together the movements and habits of some furred or feathered creature, the robin has come and made friends with me, becoming at last so intimate as to sit on the toe of my shoe and share my meal.

Birds are not the only creatures to be found thus fearless of man. An artist friend of mine, painting at his easel in a secluded spot in the Surrey hills, saw a large viper come and curl itself up close to his colour-box, too close by far to be agreeable. On looking round he saw another coiled up near to his easel. They would have done him no harm, but he thought it safer to put a greater distance between them and himself, and so left the spot.

Vipers are known to feed on young finches at times, for which reason no country lad will put his hand into any nest built in a tree before first looking into it.

But to return to our birds. The large thistles that used to grow on the waste lands were the favourite haunt of the goldfinch, who, as he hovered and flitted about, looked more like some tropical butterfly than a bird. The waste lands with their thistles are gone, and so are the goldfinches that fed on their downy seeds. A large portion of the common land is gone too. The moneyed class, who have bought up the copyholders by some arrangement

best known to themselves, secure parts of the real common land to themselves by buying up and throwing into it land that never belonged to it. Of late years the commons have become little more than tracts of ground given over to game-preserving. Notice-boards warn people off the ground that is legally their own in the most arbitrary way. Nay, I have even known people summoned before a magistrate for no other crime than that of using what from time immemorial has been their right. In many cases they have pleaded their own cause and won it. I have heard them tell their grievances with tears in their poor old eyes.

'Yes,' some of the old country folk will tell you, 'goldfinches is scarce now. They used to be about in hundreds one time o' day. You may go now for a month and not get a glint o' one.' I have asked them the reason of this, and they have answered, with a shake of their grey heads, 'They grups up the thistles' (with a forked thistle spud) 'what the birds live on, and flies in the face o' natur,' to turn it inter medder land—more fools they fur their trouble!' I know that such is the case; a small flock of goldfinches is a rare sight on a common in these days. Their true home is where stone-heaps and thistles are plentiful, where the flintgetter's old Flemish mare hangs her drowsy head, whilst the sun is high, in the shade of some clump of bushes—where the sandman's donkey rolls, and rasps the whole length and breadth of his tough hide on the sandy road of the common. In any tract famous for the growth of weed and tangle they lived and multiplied. Such spots are hard to find now, and the best place to look for goldfinches and siskins is near London, some five or six miles beyond the postal district, where the weeds thrive on land that has been cleared for building purposes. There, amongst stone-heaps and thistles, he still lives and breeds.

The bird-catchers, particularly those of the South Downs, capture them in thousands at the time of the out- and in-coming migrations. The men are well acquainted with a variety of goldfinch known by the name of 'cheval.' These birds I have seen frequently. One which I had in a cage showed but little difference in colour and habits to those generally caught, though it was very much larger in size.

This large variety is well known in the Southern counties as the 'cheval goldfinch.' They are not as numerous at any time as their smaller brethren. They used to be much prized by the bird-catchers, who would ask half as much again for a cheval in

good plumage as for any of the other birds. The price was not grudging, for they were fine specimens.

My own opinion is, that they are visitors from the Continent, where, under favourable circumstances, they have developed to their utmost limit. The fact that they are to a certain extent local strengthens this theory. The line of the Southern counties seems to be their limit, and the extent of their travelling, beyond which boundary I have never found them. It is to be hoped that in time the migrations of our most common birds will be more systematically worked out than they are at present. Amongst those birds who cross the sea are thrushes, larks, finches, and the tiny goldcrest, so tender that it dies if you hold it in your hand too long. The fishermen of the North Sea and of different parts of our dangerous coasts tell of birds taking shelter on and about their vessels when the weather is rough. They are left unmolested, and continue their journey as soon as the storm is over.

The Bramble-finch, very like the Chaffinch in shape, though more sturdily built, is a bird of a more Northern clime. In severe winters it migrates southwards in vast flocks, and is often seen associated with the Chaffinch in the beech-woods, where the mast is his chief food. The winter plumage of the Bramble-finch, or Brambling, is coloured with shades of orange, brown, black, yellow and white, with here and there a touch of grey. His appearance in the country is very uncertain, his visits depending probably on the food to be got. Though the Bramble-finches eat insects and seeds, their favourite food seems to be the beech-mast, and, as there is not a full crop of these every year, their visits are consequently irregular. Unlike the schoolboy, who hunts for beech-nuts when they first fall, the Brambling waits until they have lain under the leaves for a month or two, when the outer covering has softened. I have known numbers of these birds visit the neighbourhood of Dorking and the Tillingbourne, and especially the woods of Wotton. Of late years they have become scarcer.

I kept a pair once, to observe their change of plumage in breeding-time. It was remarkable, the head and back of the cock bird turning jet-black. They were birds of a somewhat unpleasant disposition, so after a time I gave them their liberty.

The finches are bright and intelligent birds, very useful in their proper home, the woods and the fields; but those who value a full crop—or, in some cases, any crop at all—will be careful to exclude them from the garden.

BALLADE OF THE OLIVE.

THE solemn throbbing of the drum,
 The threat'ning trumpet's brazen blare,
 The tramp of legions as they come,
 The gleam of bayonets seen afar—
 These things, no doubt, delightful are.
 Who does not feel his pulses bound
 'Mid all the pomp of glorious war?
 Yet I—well, pass the olives round.

The battle's wild delirium,
 The scent of carnage in the air,
 The rifle's crack, the cannon's boom,
 The rolling smoke, the lurid glare,
 The lightning flash of sabres bare—
 Where, though you search the world, is found
 Delight that may with this compare?
 Yet I—well, pass the olives round.

To die for altar, country, home,
 To live and wear a cross or star,
 To win, perhaps, a florid tomb,
 A doubtful bust, or, yet more rare,
 A statue in Trafalgar Square—
 When thus the warrior's toil is crowned,
 Who would not death and danger dare?
 Yet I—well, pass the olives round.

ENVOI.

'The crust is best,' so you declare,
 Whose jaw is strong, whose teeth are sound.
 Take it; the crumb shall be my share,
 For I—well, pass the olives round.

THE WHITE COMPANY.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE,

AUTHOR OF 'MICAH CLARKE.'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOW THE ARMY MADE THE PASSAGE OF RONCESVALLES.

THE whole vast plain of Gascony and of Languedoc is an arid and profitless expanse in winter, save where the swift-flowing Adour and her snow-fed tributaries, the Louts, the Oloron and the Pau, run down to the sea of Biscay. South of the Adour the jagged line of mountains which fringe the sky-line send out long granite claws, running down into the lowlands and dividing them into 'gaves' or stretches of valley. Hillocks grow into hills, and hills into mountains, each range overlying its neighbour, until they soar up in the giant chain which raises its spotless and untrodden peaks, white and dazzling, against the pale blue wintry sky.

A quiet land is this—a land where the slow-moving Basque, with his flat biretta-cap, his red sash and his hempen sandals, tills his scanty farm or drives his lean flock to their hill-side pastures. It is the country of the wolf and the isard, of the brown bear and the mountain-goat, a land of bare rock and of rushing water. Yet here it was that the will of a great prince had now assembled a gallant army; so that from the Adour to the passes of Navarre the barren valleys and wind-swept wastes were populous with soldiers and loud with the shouting of orders and the neighing of horses. For the banners of war had been flung to the wind once more, and over those glistening peaks was the highway along which Honour pointed in an age when men had chosen her as their guide.

And now all was ready for the enterprise. From Dax to St. Jean Pied-du-Port the country was mottled with the white tents of Gascons, Aquitanians and English, all eager for the advance. From all sides the free companions had trooped in, until not less than 12,000 of these veteran troops were cantoned along the frontiers of Navarre. From England had arrived the prince's brother, the Duke of Lancaster, with 400 knights in his train and a strong company of archers. Above all, an heir to the throne had been born in Bordeaux, and the prince might leave his spouse

with an easy mind, for all was well with mother and with child.

The keys of the mountain passes still lay in the hands of the shifty and ignoble Charles of Navarre, who had chaffered and bargained both with the English and with the Spanish, taking money from the one side to hold them open and from the other to keep them sealed. The mallet hand of Edward, however, had shattered all the schemes and wiles of the plotter. Neither entreaty nor courtly remonstrance came from the English prince; but Sir Hugh Calverley passed silently over the border with his company, and the blazing walls of the two cities of Miranda and Puente della Reyna warned the unfaithful monarch that there were other metals besides gold, and that he was dealing with a man to whom it was unsafe to lie. His price was paid, his objections silenced, and the mountain gorges lay open to the invaders. From the Feast of the Epiphany there was mustering and massing, until, in the first week of February—three days after the White Company joined the army—the word was given for a general advance through the defile of Roncesvalles. At five in the cold winter's morning the bugles were blowing in the hamlet of St. Jean Pied-du-Port, and by six Sir Nigel's Company, 300 strong, were on their way for the defile, pushing swiftly in the dim light up the steep curving road; for it was the prince's order that they should be the first to pass through, and that they should remain on guard at the further end until the whole army had emerged from the mountains. Day was already breaking in the east, and the summits of the great peaks had turned rosy red, while the valleys still lay in the shadow, when they found themselves with the cliffs on either hand and the long rugged pass stretching away before them.

Sir Nigel rode his great black war-horse at the head of his archers, dressed in full armour, with Black Simon bearing his banner behind him, while Alleyne at his bridle-arm carried his blazoned shield and his well-steeled ashen spear. A proud and happy man was the knight, and many a time he turned in his saddle to look at the long column of bowmen who swung swiftly along behind him.

'By Saint Paul! Alleyne,' said he, 'this pass is a very perilous place, and I would that the King of Navarre had held it against us, for it would have been a very honourable venture had it fallen to us to win a passage. I have heard the minstrels sing

of one Sir Roland who was slain by the infidels in these very parts.'

'If it please you, my fair lord,' said Black Simon, 'I know something of these parts, for I have twice served a term with the King of Navarre. There is a hospice of monks yonder, where you may see the roof among the trees, and there it was that Sir Roland was slain. The village upon the left is Orbaiceta, and I know a house therein where the right wine of Jurançon is to be bought, if it would please you to quaff a morning cup.'

'There is smoke yonder upon the right.'

'That is a village named Les Aldudes, and I know a hostel there also where the wine is of the best. It is said that the inn-keeper hath a buried treasure, and I doubt not, my fair lord, that if you grant me leave I could prevail upon him to tell us where he hath hid it.'

'Nay, nay, Simon,' said Sir Nigel curtly, 'I pray you to forget these free companion tricks. Ha! Edricson, I see that you stare about you, and in good sooth these mountains must seem wondrous indeed to one who hath but seen Butser or the Ports-down hill.'

The broken and rugged road had wound along the crests of low hills, with wooded ridges on either side of it, over which peeped the loftier mountains, the distant Peak of the South and the vast Altabisca, which towered high above them and cast its black shadow from left to right across the valley. From where they now stood they could look forward down a long vista of beech woods and jagged rock-strewn wilderness, all white with snow, to where the pass opened out upon the uplands beyond. Behind them they could still catch a glimpse of the grey plains of Gascony, and could see her rivers gleaming like coils of silver in the sunshine. As far as eye could see from among the rocky gorges and the bristles of the pine woods there came the quick twinkle and glitter of steel, while the wind brought with it sudden distant bursts of martial music from the great host which rolled by every road and by-path towards the narrow pass of Roncesvalles. On the cliffs on either side might also be seen the flash of arms and the waving of pennons where the force of Navarre looked down upon the army of strangers who passed through their territories.

'By Saint Paul!' said Sir Nigel, blinking up at them, 'I think that we have much to hope for from these cavaliers, for they

cluster very thickly upon our flanks. Pass word to the men, Aylward, that they unsling their bows, for I have no doubt that there are some very worthy gentlemen yonder who may give us some opportunity for honourable advancement.'

'I hear that the prince hath the King of Navarre as hostage,' said Alleyne, 'and it is said that he hath sworn to put him to death if there be any attack upon us.'

'It was not so that war was made when good King Edward first turned his hand to it,' said Sir Nigel sadly. 'Ah! Alleyne, I fear that you will never live to see such things, for the minds of men are more set upon money and gain than of old. By Saint Paul! it was a noble sight when two great armies would draw together upon a certain day, and all who had a vow would ride forth to discharge themselves of it. What noble spear-runnings have I not seen, and even in a humble way had a part in, when cavaliers would run a course for the easing of their souls and for the love of their ladies! Never a bad word have I for the French, for, though I have ridden twenty times up to their array, I have never yet failed to find some very gentle and worthy knight or squire who was willing to do what he might to enable me to attempt some small feat of arms. Then, when all cavaliers had been satisfied, the two armies would come to hand-strokes, and fight right merrily until one or other had the vantage. By Saint Paul! it was not our wont in those days to pay gold for the opening of passes, nor would we hold a king as hostage lest his people come to thrusts with us. In good sooth, if the war is to be carried out in such a fashion, then it is grief to me that I ever came away from Castle Twynham, for I would not have left my sweet lady had I not thought that there were deeds of arms to be done.'

'But surely, my fair lord,' said Alleyne, 'you have done some great feats of arms since we left the Lady Loring?'

'I cannot call any to mind,' answered Sir Nigel.

'There was the taking of the sea-rovers, and the holding of the keep against the Jacks.'

'Nay, nay,' said the knight, 'these were not feats of arms, but mere wayside ventures and the chances of travel. By Saint Paul! if it were not that these hills are over steep for Pommers, I would ride to these cavaliers of Navarre and see if there were not some among them who would help me to take this patch from mine eye. It is a sad sight to me to see this very fine pass, which my own Company here could hold against an army, and yet to ride

through it with as little profit as though it were the lane from my kennels to the Avon.'

All morning Sir Nigel rode in a very ill-humour, with his Company tramping behind him. It was a toilsome march over broken ground and through snow, which came often as high as the knee, yet ere the sun had begun to sink they had reached the spot where the gorge opens out on to the uplands of Navarre, and could see the towers of Pampeluna jutting up against the southern sky-line. Here the Company were quartered in a scattered mountain hamlet, and Alleyne spent the day looking down upon the swarming army which poured with gleam of spears and flaunt of standards through the narrow pass.

'Holà! mon gar,' said Aylward, seating himself upon a boulder by his side. 'This is indeed a sight upon which it is good to look, and a man might go far ere he would see so many brave men and fine horses. By my hilt! our little lord is wroth because we have come peacefully through the passes, but I will warrant him that we have fighting enow ere we turn our faces northward again. It is said that there are four-score thousand men behind the King of Spain, with Du Guesclin and all the best lances of France, who have sworn to shed their heart's blood ere this Pedro come again to the throne.'

'Yet our own army is a great one,' said Alleyne.

'Nay, there are but seven-and-twenty thousand men. Chandos hath persuaded the prince to leave many behind, and indeed I think that he is right, for there is little food and less water in these parts for which we are bound. A man without his meat or a horse without his fodder is like a wet bow-string, fit for little. But voilà, mon petit, here comes Chandos and his company, and there is many a pensil and banderole among yonder squadrons which show that the best blood of England is riding under his banners.

Whilst Aylward had been speaking, a strong column of archers had defiled through the pass beneath them. They were followed by a banner-bearer who held high the scarlet wedge upon a silver field which proclaimed the presence of the famous warrior. He rode himself within a spear's-length of his standard, clad from neck to foot in steel, but draped in the long linen gown or parement which was destined to be the cause of his death. His plumed helmet was carried behind him by his body-squire, and his head was covered by a small purple cap, from under which his

snow-white hair curled downwards to his shoulders. With his long beak-like nose and his single gleaming eye, which shone brightly from under a thick tuft of grizzled brow, he seemed to Alleyne to have something of the look of some fierce old bird of prey. For a moment he smiled, as his eye lit upon the banner of the five roses waving from the hamlet; but his course lay for Pampeluna, and he rode on after the archers.

Close at his heels came sixteen squires, all chosen from the highest families, and behind them rode twelve hundred English knights, with gleam of steel and tossing of plumes, their harness jingling, their long straight swords clanking against their stirrup-irons, and the beat of their chargers' hoofs like the low deep roar of the sea upon the shore. Behind them marched six hundred Cheshire and Lancashire archers, bearing the badge of the Audleys, followed by the famous Lord Audley himself, with the four valiant squires, Dutton of Dutton, Delves of Doddington, Fowlehurst of Crewe, and Hawkestone of Wainehill, who had all won such glory at Poitiers. Two hundred heavily armed cavalry rode behind the Audley standard, while close at their heels came the Duke of Lancaster with a glittering train, heralds tabarded with the royal arms riding three deep upon cream-coloured chargers in front of him. On either side of the young prince rode the two seneschals of Aquitaine, Sir Guiscard d'Angle and Sir Stephen Cossington, the one bearing the banner of the province and the other that of Saint George. Away behind him as far as eye could reach rolled the far-stretching, unbroken river of steel—rank after rank and column after column, with waving of plumes, glitter of arms, tossing of guidons, and flash and flutter of countless armorial devices. All day Alleyne looked down upon the changing scene, and all day the old bowman stood by his elbow, pointing out the crests of famous warriors and the arms of noble houses. Here were the gold mullets of the Pakingtons, the sable and ermine of the Mackworths, the scarlet bars of the Wakes, the gold and blue of the Grosvenors, the cinque-foils of the Cliftons, the annulets of the Musgraves, the silver pinions of the Beauchamps, the crosses of the Molineux, the bloody chevron of the Woodhouses, the red and silver of the Worsleys, the swords of the Clarks, the boars'-heads of the Lucies, the crescents of the Boyntons, and the wolf and dagger of the Lipscombs. So through the sunny winter day the chivalry of England poured down through the dark pass of Roncesvalles to the plains of Spain.

It was on a Monday that the Duke of Lancaster's division passed safely through the Pyrenees. On the Tuesday there was a bitter frost, and the ground rung like iron beneath the feet of the horses; yet ere evening the prince himself, with the main body of his army, had passed the gorge and united with his vanguard at Pampeluna. With him rode the King of Majorca, the hostage King of Navarre, and the fierce Don Pedro of Spain, whose pale blue eyes gleamed with a sinister light as they rested once more upon the distant peaks of the land which had disowned him. Under the royal banners rode many a bold Gascon baron and many a hot-blooded islander. Here were the high stewards of Aquitaine, of Saintonge, of La Rochelle, of Quercy, of Limousin, of Agenois, of Poitou, and of Bigorre, with the banners and musters of their provinces. Here also were the valiant Earl of Angus, Sir Thomas Banaster with his garter over his greave, Sir Nele Loring, second cousin to Sir Nigel, and a long column of Welsh footmen who marched under the red banner of Merlin. From dawn to sundown the long train wound through the pass, their breath reeking up upon the frosty air like the steam from a cauldron.

The weather was less keen upon the Wednesday, and the rear-guard made good their passage, with the bombards and the waggon-train. Free companions and Gascons made up this portion of the army to the number of ten thousand men. The fierce Sir Hugh Calverley, with his yellow mane, and the rugged Sir Robert Knolles, with their war-hardened and veteran companies of English bowmen, headed the long column; while behind them came the turbulent bands of the Bastard of Breteuil, Nandon de Bagerant, one-eyed Camus, Black Ortingo, La Nuit, and others whose very names seem to smack of hard hands and ruthless deeds. With them also were the pick of the Gascon chivalry—the old Duc d'Armagnac, his nephew Lord d'Albret, brooding and scowling over his wrongs, the giant Oliver de Clisson, the Captal de Buch, pink of knighthood, the sprightly Sir Perducas d'Albret, the red-bearded Lord d'Esparre, and a long train of needy and grasping border nobles, with long pedigrees and short purses, who had come down from their hillside strongholds, all hungering for the spoils and the ransoms of Spain. By the Thursday morning the whole army was encamped in the Vale of Pampeluna, and the prince had called his council to meet him in the old palace of the ancient city of Navarre.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW THE COMPANY MADE SPORT IN THE VALE OF PAMPELUNA.

WHILST the council was sitting in Pampeluna the White Company, having encamped in a neighbouring valley, close to the companies of La Nuit and of Black Ortingo, were amusing themselves with sword-play, wrestling, and shooting at the shields, which they had placed upon the hillside to serve them as butts. The younger archers, with their coats of mail thrown aside, their brown or flaxen hair tossing in the wind, and their jerkins turned back to give free play to their brawny chests and arms, stood in lines, each loosing his shaft in turn, while Johnston, Aylward, Black Simon, and half-a-score of the elders lounged up and down with critical eyes, and a word of rough praise or of curt censure for the marksmen. Behind stood knots of Gascon and Brabant crossbowmen from the companies of Ortingo and of La Nuit, leaning upon their unsightly weapons and watching the practice of the Englishmen.

‘A good shot, Hewett, a good shot!’ said old Johnston to a young bowman, who stood with his bow in his left hand, gazing with parted lips after his flying shaft. ‘You see, she finds the ring, as I knew she would from the moment that your string twanged.’

‘Loose it easy, steady, and yet sharp,’ said Aylward. ‘By my hilt! mon gar, it is very well when you do but shoot at a shield, but when there is a man behind the shield, and he rides at you with wave of sword and glint of eyes from behind his vizor, you may find him a less easy mark.’

‘It is a mark that I have found before now,’ answered the young bowman.

‘And shall again, camarade, I doubt not. But holà! Johnston, who is this who holds his bow like a crow-keeper?’

‘It is Silas Peterson, of Horsham. Do not wink with one eye and look with the other, Silas, and do not hop and dance after you shoot, with your tongue out, for that will not speed it upon its way. Stand straight and firm, as God made you. Move not the bow arm, and steady with the drawing hand!’

‘I’ faith,’ said Black Simon, ‘I am a spearman myself, and am more fitted for hand-strokes than for such work as this. Yet I have spent my days among bowmen, and I have seen many a brave shaft sped. I will not say but that we have some good marksmen here, and that this Company would be accounted a fine body of

archers at any time or place. Yet I do not see any men who bend so strong a bow or shoot as true a shaft as those whom I have known.'

'You say sooth,' said Johnston, turning his seamed and grizzled face upon the man-at-arms. 'See yonder,' he added, pointing to a bombard which lay within the camp; 'there is what hath done scath to good bowmanship, with its filthy soot and foolish roaring mouth. I wonder that a true knight, like our prince, should carry such a scurvy thing in his train. Robin, thou red-headed lurden, how oft must I tell thee not to shoot straight with a quarter-wind blowing across the mark?'

'By these ten finger-bones! there were some fine bowmen at the intaking of Calais,' said Aylward. 'I well remember that, on occasion of an outfall, a Genoan raised his arm over his mantlet, and shook it at us, a hundred paces from our line. There were twenty who loosed shafts at him, and when the man was afterwards slain it was found that he had taken eighteen through his forearm.'

'And I can call to mind,' remarked Johnston, 'that when the great cog "Christopher," which the French had taken from us, was moored two hundred paces from the shore, two archers, little Robin Withstaff and Elias Baddlesmere, in four shots each cut every strand of her hempen anchor-cord, so that she well-nigh came upon the rocks.'

'Good shooting, i' faith, rare shooting!' said Black Simon. 'But I have seen you, Johnston, and you, Samkin Aylward, and one or two others who are still with us, shoot as well as the best. Was it not you, Johnston, who took the fat ox at Finsbury butts against the pick of London town?'

A sunburnt and black-eyed Brabanter had stood near the old archers, leaning upon a large crossbow and listening to their talk, which had been carried on in that hybrid camp dialect which both nations could understand. He was a squat, bull-necked man, clad in the iron helmet, mail tunic, and woollen gambesson of his class. A jacket with hanging sleeves, slashed with velvet at the neck and wrists, showed that he was a man of some consideration, an under-officer, or file-leader of his company.

'I cannot think,' said he, 'why you English should be so fond of your six-foot stick. If it amuse you to bend it, well and good; but why should I strain and pull, when my little moulinet will do all for me, and better than I can do it for myself?'

‘I have seen good shooting with the prod and with the latch,’ said Aylward, ‘but, by my hilt! camarade, with all respect to you and to your bow, I think that is but a woman’s weapon, which a woman can point and loose as easily as a man.’

‘I know not about that,’ answered the Brabanter, ‘but this I know, that though I have served for fourteen years, I have never yet seen an Englishman do aught with the long-bow which I could not do better with my arbalest. By the three kings! I would even go further, and say that I have done things with my arbalest which no Englishman could do with his long-bow.’

‘Well said, mon gar,’ cried Aylward. ‘A good cock has ever a brave call. Now, I have shot little of late, but there is Johnston here who will try a round with you for the honour of the Company.’

‘And I will lay a gallon of Jurançon wine upon the long-bow,’ said Black Simon, ‘though I had rather, for my own drinking, that it were a quart of Twynham ale.’

‘I take both your challenge and your wager,’ said the man of Brabant, throwing off his jacket and glancing keenly about him with his black twinkling eyes. ‘I cannot see any fitting mark, for I care not to waste a bolt upon these shields, which a drunken boor could not miss at a village kermesse.’

‘This is a perilous man,’ whispered an English man-at-arms, plucking at Aylward’s sleeve. ‘He is the best marksman of all the crossbow companies, and it was he who brought down the Constable de Bourbon at Brignais. I fear that your man will come by little honour with him.’

‘Yet I have seen Johnston shoot this twenty years, and I will not flinch from it. How say you, old war-hound, will you not have a flight shot or two with this springald?’

‘Tut, tut, Aylward,’ said the old bowman. ‘My day is past, and it is for the younger ones to hold what we have gained. I take it unkindly of thee, Samkin, that thou shouldst call all eyes thus upon a broken bowman who could once shoot a fair shaft. Let me feel that bow, Wilkins! It is a Scotch bow, I see, for the upper nock is without and the lower within. By the black rood! it is a good piece of yew, well nocked, well strung, well waxed, and very joyful to the feel. I think even now that I might hit any large and goodly mark with a bow like this. Turn thy quiver to me, Aylward. I love an ash arrow pieced with cornel-wood for a roving shaft.’

'By my hilt! and so do I,' cried Aylward. 'These three gander-winged shafts are such.'

'So I see, comrade. It has been my wont to choose a saddle-backed feather for a dead shaft, and a swine-backed for a smooth flier. I will take the two of them. Ah! Samkin, lad, the eye grows dim and the hand less firm as the years pass.'

'Come then, are you not ready?' said the Brabanter, who had watched with ill-concealed impatience the slow and methodic movements of his antagonist.

'I will venture a rover with you, or try long-butts or hoyles,' said old Johnston. 'To my mind the long-bow is a better weapon than the arbalest, but it may be ill for me to prove it.'

'So I think,' quoth the other with a sneer. He drew his moulinet from his girdle, and fixing it to the windlass, he drew back the powerful double cord until it had clicked into the catch. Then from his quiver he drew a short thick quarrel, which he placed with the utmost care upon the groove. Word had spread of what was going forward, and the rivals were already surrounded, not only by the English archers of the Company, but by hundreds of arbalestiers and men-at-arms from the bands of Ortingo and La Nuit, to the latter of which the Brabanter belonged.

'There is a mark yonder on the hill,' said he; 'mayhap you can discern it.'

'I see something,' answered Johnston, shading his eyes with his hand; 'but it is a very long shoot.'

'A fair shoot—a fair shoot! Stand aside, Arnaud, lest you find a bolt through your gizzard. Now, comrade, I take no flight shot, and I give you the vantage of watching my shaft.'

As he spoke he raised his arbalest to his shoulder and was about to pull the trigger, when a large grey stork flapped heavily into view, skimming over the brow of the hill, and then soaring up into the air to pass the valley. Its shrill and piercing cries drew all eyes upon it, and, as it came nearer, a dark spot which circled above it resolved itself into a peregrine falcon, which hovered over its head, poising itself from time to time, and watching its chance of closing with its clumsy quarry. Nearer and nearer came the two birds, all absorbed in their own contest, the stork wheeling upwards, the hawk still fluttering above it, until they were not a hundred paces from the camp. The Brabanter raised his weapon to the sky, and there came the

short deep twang of his powerful string. His bolt struck the stork just where its wing meets the body, and the bird whirled aloft in a last convulsive flutter before falling wounded and flapping to the earth. A roar of applause burst from the crossbowmen; but at the instant that the bolt struck its mark old Johnston, who had stood listlessly with arrow on string, bent his bow and sped a shaft through the body of the falcon. Whipping the other from his belt, he sent it skimming some few feet from the earth with so true an aim that it struck and transfixed the stork for the second time ere it could reach the ground. A deep-chested shout of delight burst from the archers at the sight of this double feat, and Aylward, dancing with joy, threw his arms round the old marksman and embraced him with such vigour that their mail tunics clanged again.

'Ah! camarade,' he cried, 'you shall have a stoup with me for this! What then, old dog, would not the hawk please thee, but thou must have the stork as well. Oh, to my heart again!'

'It is a pretty piece of yew, and well strung,' said Johnston with a twinkle in his deep-set grey eyes. 'Even an old broken bowman might find the clout with a bow like this.'

'You have done very well,' remarked the Brabanter in a surly voice. 'But it seems to me that you have not yet shown yourself to be a better marksman than I, for I have struck that at which I aimed, and, by the three kings! no man can do more.'

'It would ill beseem me to claim to be a better marksman,' answered Johnston, 'for I have heard great things of your skill. I did but wish to show that the long-bow could do that which an arbalest could not do, for you could not with your moulinet have your string ready to speed another shaft ere the bird drop to the earth.'

'In that you have vantage,' said the crossbowman. 'By Saint James! it is now my turn to show you where my weapon has the better of you. I pray you to draw a flight shaft with all your strength down the valley, that we may see the length of your shoot.'

'That is a very strong prod of yours,' said Johnston, shaking his grizzled head as he glanced at the thick arch and powerful strings of his rival's arbalest. 'I have little doubt that you can overshoot me, and yet I have seen bowmen who could send a cloth-yard arrow further than you could speed a quarrel.'

'So I have heard,' remarked the Brabanter; 'and yet it is a

strange thing that these wondrous bowmen are never where I chance to be. Pace out the distances with a wand at every five-score, and do you, Arnaud, stand at the fifth wand to carry back my bolts to me.'

A line was measured down the valley, and Johnston, drawing an arrow to the very head, sent it whistling over the row of wands.

'Bravely drawn! A rare shoot!' shouted the bystanders. 'It is well up to the fourth mark.'

'By my hilt! it is over it!' cried Aylward. 'I can see where they have stooped to gather up the shaft.'

'We shall hear anon,' said Johnston quietly, and presently a young archer came running to say that the arrow had fallen twenty paces beyond the fourth wand.

'Four hundred paces and a score,' cried Black Simon. 'I faith it is a very long flight. Yet wood and steel may do more than flesh and blood.'

The Brabanter stepped forward with a smile of conscious triumph, and loosed the cord of his weapon. A shout burst from his comrades as they watched the swift and lofty flight of the heavy bolt.

'Over the fourth!' groaned Aylward. 'By my hilt! I think that it is well up to the fifth.'

'It is over the fifth!' cried a Gascon loudly, and a comrade came running with waving arms to say that the bolt had pitched eight paces beyond the mark of the five hundred.

'Which weapon hath the vantage now?' cried the Brabanter, strutting proudly about with shouldered arbalest, amid the applause of his companions.

'You can overshoot me,' said Johnston gently.

'Or any other man who ever bent a long-bow,' cried his victorious adversary.

'Nay, not so fast,' said a huge archer, whose mighty shoulders and red head towered high above the throng of his comrades. 'I must have a word with you ere you crow so loudly. Where is my little popper? By sainted Dick of Hampole! it will be a strange thing if I cannot outshoot that thing of thine, which to my eyes is more like a rat-trap than a bow. Will you try another flight, or do you stand by your last?'

'Five hundred and eight paces will serve my turn,' answered the Brabanter, looking askance at this new opponent.

'Tut, John,' whispered Aylward, 'you never were a marksman. Why must you thrust your spoon into this dish?'

'Easy and slow, Aylward. There are very many things which I cannot do, but there are also one or two which I have the trick of. It is in my mind that I can beat this shoot, if my bow will but hold together.'

'Go on, old babe of the woods!' 'Have at it, Hampshire!' cried the archers laughing.

'By my soul! you may grin,' cried John. 'But I learned how to make the long shoot from old Hob Miller of Milford.' He took up a great black bow, as he spoke, and sitting down upon the ground he placed his two feet on either end of the stave. With an arrow fitted, he then pulled the string towards him with both hands until the head of the shaft was level with the wood. The great bow creaked and groaned and the cord vibrated with the tension.

'Who is this fool's-head who stands in the way of my shoot?' said he, craning up his neck from the ground.

'He stands on the further side of my mark,' answered the Brabanter, 'so he has little to fear from you.'

'Well, the saints assoil him!' cried John. 'Though I think he is over near to be scathed.' As he spoke he raised his two feet, with the bow-stave upon their soles, and his cord twanged with a deep rich hum which might be heard across the valley. The measurer in the distance fell flat upon his face, and then, jumping up again, began to run in the opposite direction.

'Well shot, old lad! It is indeed over his head,' cried the bowmen.

'Mon Dieu!' exclaimed the Brabanter, 'who ever saw such a shoot?'

'It is but a trick,' quoth John. 'Many a time have I won a gallon of ale by covering a mile in three flights down Wilverley Chase.'

'It fell a hundred and thirty paces beyond the fifth mark,' shouted an archer in the distance.

'Six hundred and thirty paces! Mon Dieu! but that is a shoot! And yet it says nothing for your weapon, mon gros camarade; for it was by turning yourself into a crossbow that you did it.'

'By my hilt! there is truth in that,' cried Aylward. 'And now, friend, I will myself show you a vantage of the long-bow. I pray

you to speed a bolt against yonder shield with all your force. It is an inch of elm with bull's hide over it.'

'I scarce shot as many shafts at Brignais,' growled the man of Brabant; 'though I found a better mark there than a cantle of bull's hide. But what is this, Englishman? The shield hangs not one hundred paces from me, and a blind man could strike it.' He screwed up his string to the furthest pitch, and shot his quarrel at the dangling shield. Aylward, who had drawn an arrow from his quiver, carefully greased the head of it, and sped it at the same mark.

'Run, Wilkins,' quoth he, 'and fetch me the shield.'

Long were the faces of the Englishmen and broad the laugh of the crossbowmen as the heavy mantlet was carried towards them, for there in the centre was the thick Brabant bolt driven deeply into the wood, while there was neither sign nor trace of the cloth-yard shaft.

'By the three kings!' cried the Brabanter, 'this time at least there is no gainsaying which is the better weapon, or which the truer hand that held it. You have missed the shield, Englishman.'

'Tarry a bit! Tarry a bit, mon gar.!' quoth Aylward, and turning round the shield he showed a round clear hole in the wood at the back of it. 'My shaft has passed through it, camarade, and I trow the one which goes through is more to be feared than that which bides on the way.'

The Brabanter stamped his foot with mortification, and was about to make some angry reply, when Alleyne Edricson came riding up to the crowds of archers.

'Sir Nigel will be here anon,' said he, 'and it is his wish to speak with the Company.'

In an instant order and method took the place of general confusion. Bows, steel caps, and jacks were caught up from the grass. A long cordon cleared the camp of all strangers, while the main body fell into four lines with under-officers and file-leaders in front and on either flank. So they stood, silent and motionless, when their leader came riding towards them, his face shining and his whole small figure swelling with the news which he bore.

'Great honour has been done to us, men,' cried he: 'for, of all the army, the prince has chosen us out that we should ride onwards into the lands of Spain to spy upon our enemies. Yet, as there are many of us, and as the service may not be to the liking

of all, I pray that those will step forward from the ranks who have the will to follow me.'

There was a rustle among the bowmen, but when Sir Nigel looked up at them no man stood forward from his fellows, but the four lines of men stretched unbroken as before. Sir Nigel blinked at them in amazement, and a look of the deepest sorrow shadowed his face.

'That I should have lived to see the day!' he cried. 'What! not one——'

'My fair lord,' whispered Alleyne, 'they have all stepped forward.'

'Ah, by Saint Paul! I see how it is with them. I could not think that they would desert me. We start at dawn to-morrow, and ye are to have the horses of Sir Robert Cheney's company. Be ready, I pray ye, at early cock-crow.'

A buzz of delight burst from the archers, as they broke their ranks and ran hither and thither, whooping and cheering like boys who have news of a holiday. Sir Nigel gazed after them with a smiling face, when a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder.

'What ho! my knight-errant of Twynham!' said a voice. 'You are off to Ebro, I hear; and, by the holy fish of Tobias! you must take me under your banner.'

'What! Sir Oliver Buttethorn!' cried Sir Nigel. 'I had heard that you were come into camp, and had hoped to see you. Glad and proud shall I be to have you with me.'

'I have a most particular and weighty reason for wishing to go,' said the sturdy knight.

'I can well believe it,' returned Sir Nigel; 'I have met no man who is quicker to follow where honour leads.'

'Nay, it is not for honour that I go, Nigel.'

'For what then?'

'For pullets.'

'Pullets?'

'Yes, for the rascal vanguard have cleared every hen from the country-side. It was this very morning that Norbury, my squire, lamed his horse in riding round in quest of one, for we have a bag of truffles, and nought to eat with them. Never have I seen such locusts as this vanguard of ours. Not a pullet shall we see until we are in front of them; so I shall leave my Winchester runagates to the care of the provost-marshal, and I shall hie south with you, Nigel, with my truffles at my saddle-bow.'

'Oliver, Oliver, I know you over well,' said Sir Nigel, shaking his head, and the two old soldiers rode off together to their pavilion.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW SIR NIGEL HAWKED AT AN EAGLE.

To the south of Pampeluna in the kingdom of Navarre there stretched a high table-land, rising into bare, sterile hills, brown or grey in colour, and strewn with huge boulders of granite. On the Gascon side of the great mountains there had been running streams, meadows, forests, and little nestling villages. Here, on the contrary, were nothing but naked rocks, poor pasture, and savage stone-strewn wastes. Gloomy defiles or barrancas intersected this wild country with mountain torrents dashing and foaming between their rugged sides. The clatter of waters, the scream of the eagle, and the howling of wolves were the only sounds which broke upon the silence in that dreary and inhospitable region.

Through this wild country it was that Sir Nigel and his Company pushed their way, riding at times through vast defiles where the brown gnarled cliffs shot up on either side of them, and the sky was but a long winding blue slit between the clustering lines of box which fringed the lips of the precipices; or again leading their horses along the narrow and rocky paths worn by the muleteers upon the edges of the chasm, where under their very elbows they could see the white streak which marked the *gave* which foamed a thousand feet below them. So for two days they pushed their way through the wild places of Navarre, past Fuente, over the rapid Ega, through Estella, until upon a winter's evening the mountains fell away from in front of them, and they saw the broad blue Ebro curving betwixt its double line of homesteads and of villages. The fishers of Viana were aroused that night by rough voices speaking in a strange tongue, and ere morning Sir Nigel and his men had ferried the river and were safe upon the land of Spain.

All the next day they lay in a pine wood near to the town of Logrono, resting their horses and taking counsel as to what they should do. Sir Nigel had with him Sir William Felton, Sir Oliver Buttethorn, stout old Sir Simon Burley, the Scotch knight-

errant, the Earl of Angus, and Sir Richard Causton, all accounted among the bravest knights in the army, together with sixty veteran men-at-arms, and three hundred and twenty archers. Spies had been sent out in the morning, and returned after night-fall to say that the King of Spain was encamped some fourteen miles off in the direction of Burgos, having with him twenty thousand horse and forty-five thousand foot. A dry-wood fire had been lit, and round this the leaders crouched, the glare beating upon their rugged faces, while the hardy archers lounged and chatted amid the tethered horses, while they munched their scanty provisions.

‘For my part,’ said Sir Simon Burley, ‘I am of opinion that we have already done that which we have come for. For do we not now know where the king is, and how great a following he hath, which was the end of our journey.’

‘True,’ answered Sir William Felton, ‘but I have come on this venture because it is a long time since I have broken a spear in war, and, certes, I shall not go back until I have run a course with some cavalier of Spain. Let those go back who will, but I must see more of these Spaniards ere I turn.’

‘I will not leave you, Sir William,’ returned Sir Simon Burley; ‘and yet, as an old soldier, and one who hath seen much of war, I cannot but think that it is an ill thing for four hundred men to find themselves between an army of sixty thousand on the one side and a broad river on the other.’

‘Yet,’ said Sir Richard Causton, ‘we cannot for the honour of England go back without a blow struck.’

‘Nor for the honour of Scotland either,’ cried the Earl of Angus. ‘By Saint Andrew! I wish that I may never set eyes upon the water of Leith again, if I pluck my horse’s bridle ere I have seen this camp of theirs.’

‘By Saint Paul! you have spoken very well,’ said Sir Nigel, ‘and I have always heard that there were very worthy gentlemen among the Scots, and fine skirmishing to be had upon their border. Bethink you, Sir Simon, that we have this news from the lips of common spies, who can scarce tell us as much of the enemy and of his forces as the prince would wish to hear.’

‘You are the leader in this venture, Sir Nigel,’ the other answered, ‘and I do but ride under your banner.’

‘Yet I would fain have your rede and counsel, Sir Simon. But, touching what you say of the river, we can take heed that we

shall not have it at the back of us, for the prince hath now advanced to Salvatierra, and thence to Vittoria, so that if we come upon their camp from the further side we can make good our retreat.'

'What then would you propose?' asked Sir Simon, shaking his grizzled head as one who is but half convinced.

'That we ride forward ere the news reach them that we have crossed the river. In this way we may have sight of their army, and perchance even find occasion for some small deed against them.'

'So be it, then,' said Sir Simon Burley; and the rest of the council having approved, a scanty meal was hurriedly snatched, and the advance resumed under the cover of the darkness. All night they led their horses, stumbling and groping through wild defiles and rugged valleys, following the guidance of a frightened peasant who was strapped by the wrist to Black Simon's stirrup-leather. With the early dawn they found themselves in a black ravine, with others sloping away from it on either side, and the bare brown crags rising in long bleak terraces all round them.

'If it please you, fair lord,' said Black Simon, 'this man hath misled us, and since there is no tree upon which we may hang him, it might be well to hurl him over yonder cliff.'

The peasant, reading the soldier's meaning in his fierce eyes and harsh accents, dropped upon his knees, screaming loudly for mercy.

'How comes it, dog?' asked Sir William Felton in Spanish. 'Where is this camp to which you swore that you would lead us?'

'By the sweet Virgin! By the blessed Mother of God!' cried the trembling peasant, 'I swear to you that in the darkness I have myself lost the path.'

'Over the cliff with him!' shouted half a dozen voices; but ere the archers could drag him from the rocks to which he clung Sir Nigel had ridden up and called upon them to stop.

'How is this, sirs?' said he. 'As long as the prince doth me the honour to entrust this venture to me, it is for me only to give orders; and, by Saint Paul! I shall be right blithe to go very deeply into the matter with anyone to whom my words may give offence. How say you, Sir William? Or you, my Lord of Angus? Or you, Sir Richard?'

'Nay, nay, Nigel!' cried Sir William. 'This base peasant is too small a matter for old comrades to quarrel over. But he hath betrayed us, and certes he hath merited a dog's death.'

'Hark ye, fellow,' said Sir Nigel. 'We give you one more chance to find the path. We are about to gain much honour, Sir William, in this enterprise, and it would be a sorry thing if the first blood shed were that of an unworthy boor. Let us say our morning orisons, and it may chance that ere we finish he may strike upon the track.'

With bowed heads and steel caps in hand, the archers stood at their horses' heads, while Sir Simon Burley repeated the Pater, the Ave, and the Credo. Long did Alleyne bear the scene in mind—the knot of knights in their dull leaden-hued armour, the ruddy visage of Sir Oliver, the craggy features of the Scottish earl, the shining scalp of Sir Nigel, with the dense ring of hard bearded faces and the long brown heads of the horses, all topped and circled by the beetling cliffs. Scarce had the last deep 'Amen' broken from the Company, when, in an instant, there rose the scream of a hundred bugles, with the deep rolling of drums and the clashing of cymbals, all sounding together in one deafening uproar. Knights and archers sprang to arms, convinced that some great host was upon them; but the guide dropped upon his knees and thanked heaven for its mercies.

'We have found them, caballeros!' he cried. 'This is their morning call. If ye will but deign to follow me, I will set them before you ere a man might tell his beads.'

As he spoke he scrambled down one of the narrow ravines, and, climbing over a low ridge at the further end, he led them into a short valley with a stream purling down the centre of it and a very thick growth of elder and of box upon either side. Pushing their way through the dense brushwood, they looked out upon a scene which made their hearts beat harder and their breath come faster.

In front of them there lay a broad plain, watered by two winding streams and covered with grass, stretching away to where, in the furthest distance, the towers of Burgos bristled up against the light blue morning sky. Over all this vast meadow there lay a great city of tents—thousands upon thousands of them, laid out in streets and in squares like a well-ordered town. High silken pavilions or coloured marquees, shooting up from among the crowd of meaner dwellings, marked where the great lords and barons of

Leon and Castile displayed their standards, while over the white roofs, as far as eye could reach, the waving of ancients, pavons, pensils, and banderoles, with flash of gold and glow of colours, proclaimed that all the chivalry of Iberia were mustered in the plain beneath them. Far off, in the centre of the camp, a huge palace of red and white silk, with the royal arms of Castile waving from the summit, announced that the gallant Henry lay there in the midst of his warriors.

As the English adventurers, peeping out from behind their brushwood screen, looked down upon this wondrous sight they could see that the vast army in front of them was already afoot. The first pink light of the rising sun glittered upon the steel caps and breastplates of dense masses of slingers and of crossbowmen, who drilled and marched in the spaces which had been left for their exercise. A thousand columns of smoke reeked up into the pure morning air where the faggots were piled and the camp-kettles already simmering. In the open plain clouds of light horse galloped and swooped with swaying bodies and waving javelins, after the fashion which the Spanish had adopted from their Moorish enemies. All along by the sedgy banks of the rivers long lines of pages led their masters' chargers down to water, while the knights themselves lounged in gaily dressed groups about the doors of their pavilions, or rode out, with their falcons upon their wrists and their greyhounds behind them, in quest of quail or of leveret.

'By my hilt! mon gar.,' whispered Aylward to Alleyne, as the young squire stood with parted lips and wondering eyes, gazing down at the novel scene before him, 'we have been seeking them all night, but now that we have found them I know not what we are to do with them.'

'You say sooth, Samkin,' quoth old Johnston. 'I would that we were upon the far side of Ebro again, for there is neither honour nor profit to be gained here. What say you, Simon?'

'By the rood!' cried the fierce man-at-arms, 'I will see the colour of their blood ere I turn my mare's head for the mountains. Am I a child, that I should ride for three days and nought but words at the end of it?'

'Well said, my sweet honeysuckle!' cried Hordle John. 'I am with you, like hilt to blade. Could I but lay hands upon one of those gay prancers yonder, I doubt not that I should have ransom enough from him to buy my mother a new cow.'

'A cow!' said Aylward. 'Say rather ten acres and a home-
stead on the banks of Avon.'

'Say you so? Then, by Our Lady! here is for yonder one in
the red jerkin!'

He was about to push recklessly forward into the open, when
Sir Nigel himself darted in front of him, with his hand upon his
breast.

'Back!' said he. 'Our time is not yet come, and we must
lie here until evening. Throw off your jacks and headpieces, lest
their eyes catch the shine, and tether the horses among the rocks.'

The order was swiftly obeyed, and in ten minutes the archers
were stretched along by the side of the brook, munching the
bread and the bacon which they had brought in their bags, and
craning their necks to watch the ever-changing scene beneath
them. Very quiet and still they lay, save for a muttered jest or
whispered order, for twice during the long morning they heard
bugle-calls from amid the hills on either side of them, which
showed that they had thrust themselves in between the outposts
of the enemy. The leaders sat amongst the box-wood, and took
counsel together as to what they should do; while from below
there surged up the buzz of voices, the shouting, the neighing of
horses, and all the uproar of a great camp.

'What boots it to wait?' said Sir William Felton. 'Let us
ride down upon their camp ere they discover us.'

'And so say I,' cried the Scottish earl; 'for they do not know
that there is any enemy within thirty long leagues of them.'

'For my part,' said Sir Simon Burley, 'I think that it is
madness, for you cannot hope to rout this great army; and where
are you to go and what are you to do when they have turned
upon you? How say you, Sir Oliver Buttethorn?'

'By the apple of Eve!' cried the fat knight, 'it appears to
me that this wind brings a very savoury smell of garlic and of
onions from their cooking-kettles. I am in favour of riding down
upon them at once, if my old friend and comrade here is of the
same mind.'

'Nay,' said Sir Nigel, 'I have a plan by which we may at-
tempt some small deed upon them, and yet, by the help of God,
may be able to draw off again; which, as Sir Simon Burley hath
said, would be scarce possible in any other way.'

'How then, Sir Nigel?' asked several voices.

'We shall lie here all day; for amid this brushwood it is ill

for them to see us. Then, when evening comes, we shall sally out upon them and see if we may not gain some honourable advancement from them.'

'But why then rather than now?'

'Because we shall have nightfall to cover us when we draw off, so that we may make our way back through the mountains. I would station a score of archers here in the pass, with all our pennons jutting forth from the rocks, and as many nakirs and drums and bugles as we have with us, so that those who follow us in the fading light may think that the whole army of the prince is upon them, and fear to go further. What think you of my plan, Sir Simon?'

'By my troth! I think very well of it,' cried the prudent old commander. 'If four hundred men must needs run a tilt against sixty thousand, I cannot see how they can do it better or more safely.'

'And so say I,' cried Felton, heartily. 'But I wish the day were over, for it will be an ill thing for us if they chance to light upon us.'

The words were scarce out of his mouth when there came a clatter of loose stones, the sharp clink of trotting hoofs, and a dark-faced cavalier, mounted upon a white horse, burst through the bushes and rode swiftly down the valley from the end which was farthest from the Spanish camp. Lightly armed, with his vizor open and a hawk perched upon his left wrist, he looked about him with the careless air of a man who is bent wholly upon pleasure, and unconscious of the possibility of danger. Suddenly, however, his eyes lit upon the fierce faces which glared out at him from the brushwood. With a cry of terror, he thrust his spurs into his horse's sides and dashed for the narrow opening of the gorge. For a moment it seemed as though he would have reached it, for he had trampled over or dashed aside the archers who threw themselves in his way; but Hordle John seized him by the foot in his grasp of iron and dragged him from the saddle, while two others caught the frightened horse.

'Ho, ho!' roared the great archer. 'How many cows wilt buy my mother, if I set thee free?'

'Hush that bull's bellowing!' cried Sir Nigel impatiently. 'Bring the man here. By Saint Paul! it is not the first time that we have met; for, if I mistake not, it is Don Diego Alvarez, who was once at the prince's court.'

'It is indeed I,' said the Spanish knight, speaking in the French tongue, 'and I pray you to pass your sword through my heart; for how can I live—I, a caballero of Castile—after being dragged from my horse by the base hands of a common archer?'

'Fret not for that,' answered Sir Nigel. 'For, in sooth, had he not pulled you down, a dozen cloth-yard shafts had crossed each other in your body.'

'By Saint James! it were better so than to be polluted by his touch,' answered the Spaniard, with his black eyes sparkling with rage and hatred. 'I trust that I am now the prisoner of some honourable knight or gentleman.'

'You are the prisoner of the man who took you, Sir Diego,' answered Sir Nigel. 'And I may tell you that better men than either you or I have found themselves before now prisoners in the hands of archers of England.'

'What ransom, then, does he demand?' asked the Spaniard.

Big John scratched his red head and grinned in high delight when the question was propounded to him. 'Tell him,' said he, 'that I shall have ten cows and a bull too, if it be but a little one. Also a dress of blue sendall for mother and a red one for Joan; with five acres of pasture-land, two scythes, and a fine new grindstone. Likewise a small house, with stalls for the cows, and thirty-six gallons of beer for the thirsty weather.'

'Tut, tut!' cried Sir Nigel, laughing. 'All these things may be had for money; and I think, Don Diego, that five thousand crowns is not too much for so renowned a knight.'

'It shall be duly paid him.'

'For some days we must keep you with us; and I must crave leave also to use your shield, your armour, and your horse.'

'My harness is yours by the law of arms,' said the Spaniard, gloomily.

'I do but ask the loan of it. I have need of it this day, but it shall be duly returned to you. Set guards, Aylward, with arrow on string, at either end of the pass; for it may happen that some other cavaliers may visit us ere the time be come.' All day the little band of Englishmen lay in the sheltered gorge, looking down upon the vast host of their unconscious enemies. Shortly after mid-day, a great uproar of shouting and cheering broke out in the camp, with mustering of men and calling of bugles. Clambering up among the rocks, the companions saw a long rolling cloud of dust along the whole eastern sky-line, with the glint of spears and

the flutter of pennons, which announced the approach of a large body of cavalry. For a moment a wild hope came upon them that perhaps the prince had moved more swiftly than had been planned, that he had crossed the Ebro, and that this was his vanguard sweeping to the attack.

'Surely I see the red pile of Chandos at the head of yonder squadron!' cried Sir Richard Causton, shading his eyes with his hand.

'Not so,' answered Sir Simon Burley, who had watched the approaching host with a darkening face. 'It is even as I feared. That is the double eagle of Du Guesclin.'

'You say very truly,' cried the Earl of Angus. 'These are the levies of France, for I can see the ensigns of the Marshal d'Andreghen, with that of the Lord of Antoing and of Briseuil, and of many another from Brittany and Anjou.'

'By Saint Paul! I am very glad of it,' said Sir Nigel. 'Of these Spaniards I know nothing; but the French are very worthy gentlemen, and will do what they can for our advancement.'

'There are at the least four thousand of them, and all men-at-arms,' cried Sir William Felton. 'See, there is Bertrand himself, beside his banner, and there is King Henry, who rides to welcome him. Now they all turn and come into the camp together.'

As he spoke, the vast throng of Spaniards and of Frenchmen trooped across the plain, with brandished arms and tossing banners. All day long the sound of revelry and of rejoicing from the crowded camp swelled up to the ears of the Englishmen, and they could see the soldiers of the two nations throwing themselves into each other's arms and dancing hand-in-hand round the blazing fires. The sun had sunk behind a cloud-bank in the west before Sir Nigel at last gave word that the men should resume their arms and have their horses ready. He had himself thrown off his armour, and had dressed himself from head to foot in the harness of the captured Spaniard.

'Sir William,' said he, 'it is my intention to attempt a small deed, and I ask you therefore that you will lead this outfall upon the camp. For me, I will ride into their camp with my squire and two archers. I pray you to watch me, and to ride forth when I am come among the tents. You will leave twenty men behind here, as we planned this morning, and you will ride back here after you have ventured as far as seems good to you.'

‘I will do as you order, Nigel; but what is it that you purpose to do?’

‘You will see anon, and indeed it is but a trifling matter. Alleyne, you will come with me, and lead a spare horse by the bridle. I will have the two archers who rode with us through France for they are trusty men and of stout heart. Let them ride behind us, and let them leave their bows here among the bushes, for it is not my wish that they should know that we are Englishmen. Say no word to any whom we may meet, and, if any speak to you, pass on as though you heard them not. Are you ready?’

‘I am ready, my fair lord,’ said Alleyne.

‘And I,’ ‘And I,’ cried Aylward and John.

‘Then the rest I leave to your wisdom, Sir William; and if God sends us fortune we shall meet you again in this gorge ere it be dark.’

So saying, Sir Nigel mounted the white horse of the Spanish cavalier, and rode quietly forth from his concealment with his three companions behind him, Alleyne leading his master’s own steed by the bridle. So many small parties of French and Spanish horse were sweeping hither and thither that the small band attracted little notice, and making its way at a gentle trot across the plain, they came as far as the camp without challenge or hindrance. On and on they pushed past the endless lines of tents, amid the dense swarms of horsemen and of footmen, until the huge royal pavilion stretched in front of them. They were close upon it when of a sudden there broke out a wild hubbub from a distant portion of the camp, with screams and war-cries and all the wild tumult of battle. At the sound soldiers came rushing from their tents, knights shouted loudly for their squires, and there was mad turmoil on every hand of bewildered men and plunging horses. At the royal tent a crowd of gorgeously dressed servants ran hither and thither in helpless panic, for the guard of soldiers who were stationed there had already ridden off in the direction of the alarm. A man-at-arms on either side of the doorway were the sole protectors of the royal dwelling.

‘I have come for the king,’ whispered Sir Nigel; ‘and, by Saint Paul! he must back with us or I must bide here.’

Alleyne and Aylward sprang from their horses, and flew at the two sentries, who were disarmed and beaten down in an instant by so furious and unexpected an attack. Sir Nigel dashed into the royal tent, and was followed by Hordle John as soon as the horses

had been secured. From within came wild screamings and the clash of steel, and then the two emerged once more, their swords and forearms reddened with blood, while John bore over his shoulder the senseless body of a man whose gay surcoat, adorned with the lions and towers of Castile, proclaimed him to belong to the royal house. A crowd of white-faced sewers and pages swarmed at their heels, those behind pushing forwards, while the foremost shrank back from the fierce faces and reeking weapons of the adventurers. The senseless body was thrown across the spare horse, the four sprang to their saddles, and away they thundered with loose reins and busy spurs through the swarming camp.

But confusion and disorder still reigned among the Spaniards, for Sir William Felton and his men had swept through half their camp, leaving a long litter of the dead and the dying to mark their course. Uncertain who were their attackers, and unable to tell their English enemies from their newly arrived Breton allies, the Spanish knights rode wildly hither and thither in aimless fury. The mad turmoil, the mixture of races, and the fading light, were all in favour of the four who alone knew their own purpose among the vast uncertain multitude. Twice ere they reached open ground they had to break their way through small bodies of horses, and once there came a whistle of arrows and singing of stones about their ears; but, still dashing onwards, they shot out from among the tents and found their own comrades retreating for the mountains at no very great distance from them. Another five minutes of wild galloping over the plain, and they were all back in their gorge, while their pursuers fell back before the rolling of drums and blare of trumpets, which seemed to proclaim that the whole army of the prince was about to emerge from the mountain passes.

‘By my soul! Nigel,’ cried Sir Oliver, waving a great boiled ham over his head, ‘I have come by something which I may eat with my truffles! I had a hard fight for it, for there were three of them with their mouths open and the knives in their hands, all sitting agape round the table, when I rushed in upon them. How say you, Sir William, will you not try the smack of the famed Spanish swine, though we have but the brook water to wash it down?’

‘Later, Sir Oliver,’ answered the old soldier, wiping his grimed face. ‘We must further into the mountains ere we be in safety. But what have we here, Nigel?’

‘It is a prisoner whom I have taken, and in sooth, as he came from the royal tent and wears the royal arms upon his jupon, I trust that he is the King of Spain.’

‘The King of Spain!’ cried the companions, crowding round in amazement.

‘Nay, Sir Nigel,’ said Felton, peering at the prisoner through the uncertain light. ‘I have twice seen Henry of Transtamare, and certes this man in no way resembles him.’

‘Then, by the light of heaven! I will ride back for him,’ cried Sir Nigel.

‘Nay, nay, the camp is in arms, and it would be rank madness. Who are you, fellow?’ he added in Spanish, ‘and how is it that you dare to wear the arms of Castile?’

The prisoner was but recovering the consciousness which had been squeezed from him by the grip of Hordle John. ‘If it please you,’ he answered, ‘I and nine others are the body-squires of the king, and must ever wear his arms, so as to shield him from even such perils as have threatened him this night. The king is at the tent of the brave Du Guesclin, where he will sup to-night. But I am a caballero of Aragon, Don Sancho Penelosa, and, though I be no king, I am yet ready to pay a fitting price for my ransom.’

‘By Saint Paul! I will not touch your gold,’ cried Sir Nigel. ‘Go back to your master and give him greeting from Sir Nigel Loring of Twynham Castle, telling him that I had hoped to make his better acquaintance this night, and that, if I have disordered his tent, it was but in my eagerness to know so famed and courteous a knight. Spur on, comrades! for we must cover many a league ere we can venture to light fire or to loosen girth. I had hoped to ride without this patch to-night, but it seems that I must carry it yet a little longer.’

(To be continued.)

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